

# *Horizon*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE & ART

John Banting  
Arthur Calder-Marshall  
R. H. S. Crossman  
William Empson  
Brian Howard  
Laurie Lee  
Peter Quennell  
Frank Richards  
Anne Ridler  
Francis Scarfe  
Stephen Spender  
Dylan Thomas  
Ruthven Todd  
W. J. Turner  
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MAY VOL. I, No. 5 1940

*Edited by Cyril Connolly*

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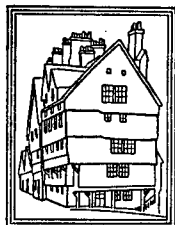
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# HORIZON

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Vol. I. No. 5. May 1940

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*The editorial and publishing offices of HORIZON are at  
6 Selwyn House, Lansdowne Terrace, W.C.1.—Six months'  
subscription, 6/6 net, including postage. U.S.A.—\$1.75.*

# LETTER OF THE MONTH

DEAR SIR,

Your last Comment was a fulmination; and fulminations are always to the good; besides being very pleasant to write. But I don't feel that fulmination by itself is enough, and I looked in vain for suggestions more constructive.

If you think that activities of this sort are likely to persuade the Government, or anybody else who has money, to give some of it to genuine artists, you are deluding yourself. The only people who have ever given money to the artist (which is the root of the whole problem) are the people who like and respect the work he does.

The artist is thrown back, as always, on to the mercies of the class to which I have already referred: the people who like his work and think it of value. I would suggest that during these present lean times it is to these people (who are part fellow-artists, part educated men of good will) that he must look for sustenance. And I would suggest, moreover, that this sustenance will have to take the form of direct financial subsidy.

This is not a new thing. We should have had very little of Wordsworth but for Raisley Calvert's legacy and the benevolences of Sir George Beaumont; one can't imagine what would have happened to Coleridge without the Wedgwoods' £150 annuity; Lady Holland offered Campbell money (though I'm not sure whether he accepted it); Butts for years practically kept Blake off the parish; and even quite recently Samuel Butler gave cheques to people for *nothing*.

It seems to me that there is a great deal of cant talked and written to-day about the artist: the idea being always that some others shall support him for our benefit. But why should they? They don't like his product, and we do; and the responsibility for his maintenance therefore devolves on us, and on nobody else. I am quite aware that, as a point of principle, the artist ought not to be dependent upon private charity—for that is what it amounts to—but what, in effect, does this matter so long as he gets done the work that he has in him to do?

I suggest that the sort of people who read your paper are supposed to be the sort of people who are interested in preserving the arts, and that it is in part their *personal* job to see that this is done. If you were to put it to them, I think you might well be surprised at the microscopic result. Yet if this sort of person will not do it, why should you expect the other sort to do so?

I suggest that there are still a reasonable number of people who, at a pinch, could reduce their incomes by a quarter or a fifth for a purpose of this sort. An activity of this nature might even shame a Government into doing something of the same kind, even if it were only a tax-remission of the sort you so very sensibly suggest on gifts of this order. And there could certainly be nothing which would demonstrate more clearly the extreme seriousness of the position.

Yours faithfully,

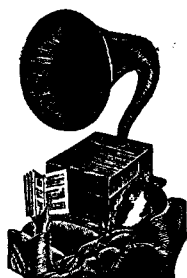
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DENT



## COMMENT

THE war, except for Spender's *Journal*, has so far taken up little space in the contents of *Horizon*. As this month, (like every month), may prove the last moment available for its impartial consideration, the deadline for clear thinking, it seems a time to put down a few reflections on the war and on the attitude of artists and writers to it. *Horizon* receives between two and three hundred contributions a month. By now a thousand have been submitted, of which nine hundred have no bearing whatever on the war, while the remaining hundred are either Communist, Pacifist, or Defeatist. No contributor has yet expressed a wish to beat the Germans; nor been provoked into writing about the black-out, the blockade, the *Graf Spee* or Scapa Flow. The bomber, which played such a large part in pre-war poetry, is no longer mentioned. What belligerence there is exists only in contributors of over military age: it is clear that there is a cleavage between the opinions, (old-fashioned anti-fascist), of the over-thirty-fives, and the truculent sheep-to-the-slaughter recalcitrance of the young contributors. To some older writers the war is something impossible to get into without influence; a splendid Reserved Occupation. These generalizations apply only to our contributors, and have no bearing on the feeling of the country as a whole, which would seem to be extremely bellicose, with a real desire for large-scale bombings, a win-the-war cabinet, ferocious handling of neutrals, and an invasion of Russia. People want an invasion of Russia because they think it would be easier than an invasion of Germany: the idea that the working-class would not stand for it is not proven. It is only the intelligentsia who would not stand for it, and they do not at present count politically.

For the intelligentsia are confused and muddled, and while they remain so, the drift towards reaction will continue. There are two Englands, one feudal and capitalist, the other progressive, technocratic, Liberal and Labour. The Civil

Service holds the balance between them, and the side which it takes governs the country. The intelligentsia can no longer influence the Right; the divorce between brains and 'Society' is absolute—but it can greatly influence the Left, and the Bureaucracy which now governs. At the moment it is becoming an object of ridicule, a debating society in which the screams of the How-could-yous rise above the jeers of the I-told-you-so's.

How can the intelligentsia be re-united? How can they take again their critical and constructive rôle as the real Opposition of England, the permanent guilty conscience of the pluto-democracy in which we live? They have split over three questions: Russia, Pacifism, and Mr. Chamberlain, and before they can again become a progressive force these difficulties must be resolved.

Nobody need believe any longer that Russia is Paradise, nor should the divinity of Stalin remain an article of faith. It should now be perfectly clear that as long as Russia considers herself the enemy of the Western democracies, only defeat by Germany can bring Communism to us in its present form. The position of the Stalinite who is not prepared to fight for Russia and Germany against England will become untenable, and it is time for such Left-wing intellectuals to cut their losses and re-form round some nucleus of a political party which is not dependent for its ideological content on the strategical ambitions—however impressive—of a rival imperialist power. Intellectuals owe much to Communism, which thrust a weapon into the hands of the ever-vacillating Liberal Hamlet, and almost persuaded him to use it: they can repay by helping the less intransigent Stalinites to save their face.

The Chamberlain-complex is more easily remedied. The intellectuals were so inflamed by Left-wing agitation against Chamberlain that when he adopted an anti-Hitler policy they either could not believe it, or were determined to deny him the rewards of conversion. Hitler is an immeasurably greater danger than Chamberlain. To continue to be anti-Hitler and anti-Chamberlain is illogical, and it is a

tragedy of the war that so many Americans, as well as English intellectuals, have refused to see that Chamberlain is not England, but a leader appointed by the party in power at the moment, and whom time will remove; St. George also may have inspired little enthusiasm, the Dragon was not thereby less dangerous. A democratic government would inspire more confidence as to English war aims, it might also be, since war is a reactionary activity, less suited to winning the war.

The problem of Pacifism goes far deeper—indeed, the horror of violence is a main ingredient in all the vacillation which has characterized our policy: it is as much a cause of the war as is the love of it. There are two bases for Pacifism. One is that the civilized nations really are beginning to recognize war as an obsolete method of obtaining decisions. However much they may arm or threaten, and however much a percentage may enjoy it, they know that the slaughter involved in modern warfare is so out of proportion to the ends involved that all the arguments and sentiments which have been used to justify war in the past, such as that it is a '*belle occupation*' (Napoleon); source of virility, fount of honour, guard against over-population, remedy for surplus males; have been falsified. Gradually it will become clear that war can only be waged by the threat of war; by the problematical value of one secret weapon, (both too dangerous to use), against another. The other basis for Pacifism is the idea of 'Thou shalt not kill'; the guilt-feelings about our aggressive instincts, which teach us that acts of violence that release more of that aggression than can be liberated in sport, competition, or sex, recoil on the aggressor.

But in spite of this we are at war: and the Pacifist position is weak in so far as it can suggest no other means of getting rid of Hitler except surrender to him—for a victorious Hitler would bring a persecution hardly distinguishable from war. It is therefore only the Pacifist-Martyr whose position is impregnable. The proof of a democracy is in its ability to tolerate undemocratic methods without corruption; could not a Pacifist in the same way be able to set aside his

Pacifism until he can provide a better solution? Conscientious objectors are not called upon to fight, so that it is only necessary for conscientious Pacifists to suspend some of their objections. Thus it seems that the cleavages among the intellectuals might be repaired if the floating homeless population of undecided Liberal and ex-Liberal doubting Thomases, those who are both fascinated and repelled by certainty in others, could be induced to support the war they helped to make, for the sake of an England they would help to change. The hundred per cent Pacifists would lose their wellwishers, the hundred per cent Stalinites their 'fellow-travellers', to the ultimate advantage of all concerned. The fanatics could use the pause to clarify their beliefs, the sceptics to lick their wounds and learn from their mistakes.

Meanwhile, why are we at war? Twenty years ago we were able to enforce our will on Europe, and in those years everything has been lost that was gained, and everything has happened which we then sought to avoid. To analyse the causes is like going over a game of chess and saying, 'Suppose I hadn't done that' when no amount of moves taken back will liberate the player from the consequences of his own inexperience. But there are some mistakes which need never be repeated.

Europe is a top-heavy continent, all the brains and all the riches are in the West, which is civilized, while the East is barbarous and undeveloped. It is ridiculous that the West should be held back by the East, and it is doubtful, for example, if many of the Balkans, at the rate at which modern technical progress invalidates historical and even geographical title deeds, can preserve their independence. Eastern Europe is backward, and needs a tutor. That tutor should be Berlin or Vienna, if they were tutors whom either pupil or employer could trust. The other war-breeding pocket is Prussia, and until trade and culture can render Prussian militarism less attractive, war and invasion will continue to brew. The suggestion of allowing a dehitlerized Germany to modernize the Balkans while giving France control of the Rhine bridge-heads might offer a solution.

But the most obvious cause of the war has been the lack of cohesion between England and France. A Right-wing government in one country has been usually faced with a Left-wing one in the other, and they have played, to Germany and Italy, the alternate rôles of the stern father with the rod, and the mother with the box of chocolates. Lloyd George and Clemenceau, MacDonald and Poincaré, Baldwin and Flandin, Eden and Laval, Chamberlain and Blum—the list of grotesquely ill-assorted couples is interminable. If England and France are to preserve the peace of Europe they must be represented by the same kind of government, and if they are to remain democracies they must remodel the parliamentary system, where the hysteria of the mass cloaks the intrigues of the few, into a representation with a more intelligent and more popular basis.

Meanwhile the almond blossom is out, the sun shines, the streets look shabbier and the shops emptier, and the war slowly permeates into our ways of living. It is a war which seems archaic and unreal, a war in which eighty million people are trying to kill us, a war of which we are all ashamed—and yet a war which has to be won, and can only be won by energetic militant extroverted leaders who are immune from the virus of indecision. And the intellectuals recoil from the war as if it were a best-seller. They are enough ahead of their time to despise it, and yet they must realize that they nevertheless represent the culture that is being defended. Abyssinian intellectuals, Albanian intellectuals, Chinese intellectuals, Basque intellectuals, they are hunted like the sea-otter, they are despoiled like the egret. Our own are the last to survive. Granted the whole cumulus of error in the last twenty years, the greedy interlocking directorship of democratic weakness and cabinet stupidity, then the war is inevitable. It is a war which dissipates energy and disperses friends, which lowers the standard of thinking and feeling, and which sends all those who walk near emotional, mental, or financial precipices toppling over; it is a war which is as obsolete as drawing and quartering; which negatives every reasonable conception of what life is for, every ambition of



the mind or delight of the senses; and which inaugurates an era of death, privation, danger, and boredom, guaranteeing the insecurity of projects and the impermanence of personal relations. But there it is. We are in it: for as long as Hitler exists we must stay there. The war is the enemy of creative activity, and writers and painters are wise and right to ignore it and to concentrate their talent on other subjects. Since they are politically impotent, they can use this time to develop at deeper emotional levels, or to improve their weapons by technical experiment, for they have so long been mobilized in various causes that they are losing the intellectual's greatest virtues: the desire to pursue the truth wherever it may lead, and the belief in the human mind as the supreme organ through which life can be apprehended, improved and intensified.

But they must also realize that their liberty and security are altogether threatened, that Fascism is against *them*, and that the war, although not as anti-fascist as they could wish, is much more anti-fascist than anything else that has happened. The Anglo-French artist and the intellectual are lucky to be alive. They must celebrate by creating more culture as fast as they can; by flowering like the almond blossom, or like Mr. Eliot, whose *East Coker* in the March 21st *New English Weekly* is one of the finest long poems of the century: for if, like M. Gide, they take a vow of silence till the war is over; or produce as little as do some of our lords of language, they will disappear: and their disappearance provide further evidence that the human race has outstayed its welcome.

## WILLIAM EMPSON

## POEM

I have mislaid the torment and the fear.  
You should be praised for taking them away.  
Those who doubt drugs, let them doubt which was here.

Well are they doubted for they turn out dear.  
I feed on flatness and am last to leave.  
Verse likes despair. Blame it upon the beer.  
I have mislaid the torment and the fear.

All losses haunt us. It was a reprieve  
Made Dostoevsky speak out queer and clear.

Those stay most haunting that most soon deceive.

And turn out no loss of the various zoo  
The public spirits or the private play.  
Praised once for having taken these away  
What is it else then such a thing can do?

Lose is Find with great marsh lights like you.  
Those who doubt drugs, let them doubt which was here  
When this leaves the green afterlight of day.  
Nor they nor I know what we shall believe.  
You should be praised for taking them away.

## BRIAN HOWARD

# GONE TO REPORT

For twenty-one years he remained, faithful and lounging  
There, under the last tree, at the end of the charming  
evening street.

His flask was always full for the unhappy, rich, or bold;  
He could always tell you where you wanted to go, what you  
wanted to be told,

And during all the dear twenty-one years he remained  
exactly twenty-one years old.

His eyes were the most honest of all, his smile the most  
naturally sweet.

Many, many trusted him who trusted no one. Many  
extremely clever

Persons will kill themselves unless they find him. They  
search

Sparkling with fear, through the whole quarter. They even  
enter the Church.

Crowds, across all Europe, are beginning to feel they've  
been left in the lurch.

But it's worse than that. It's something they couldn't tell  
anyone, ever.

He's abandoned his post because he was the greatest of all  
informers,

And now he's gone to report. He never had a moment's  
leisure.

He was paid by so many powers that one shakes with shame  
To think of them. Time, the Army and Navy, Pain and  
Blame,

The Police, the Family, and Death. No one will escape. He  
got every name.

And he wasn't at all what he said he was. Mr. Pleasure.

*March 1940*

## ANNE RIDLER

## POEM

With buds embalmed alive in ice,  
Flies in amber, the wood lies:  
On snow even the shadows are white,  
And we walk tipsy with too much light.  
In slanting rays, like the damned  
Our footsteps flame but make no sound.  
While in this waste we wander  
I tell him again of the godlike Flounder,  
The garish desires of the fisherman's wife  
(Desires we saw from the first unsafe,  
For the same sin, made tropical,  
Is in the Garden and the Fall).  
But as I describe the granted glories,  
The crowns, candles, golden floors,  
I see his longing in his eyes:  
Eyes of the humble hoping at Heaven,  
Eyes of Adam a mile from Eden.  
I see him a child with his joys round him,  
One foot still on the coral strand,  
The sun like a locket hung from his hand,  
Now a man with his griefs about him.

If his hunger is holy, where hers was greed,  
Can he always avoid the wish to be God?  
Heaven revolves, distant, perfect,  
Placid and impregnable as in a Collect;  
And we walk in a waste of snows,  
Yet see that power before our eyes  
Which if we learn its usage can  
Break up the amber, reverse the sun,  
The bird's-eye glory to full sight  
Bring, and outcasts into delight.

## DYLAN THOMAS

## POEM

There was a saviour  
Rarer than radium,  
Commoner than water, crueller than truth;  
Children kept from the sun  
Assembled at his tongue  
To hear the golden note turn in a groove,  
Prisoners of wishes locked their eyes  
In the jails and studies of his keyless smiles.

The voice of children says  
From a lost wilderness  
There was calm to be done in his safe unrest,  
When hindering man hurt  
Man, animal, or bird  
We hid our fears in that murdering breath,  
Silence, silence to do, when the earth grew loud,  
In lairs and asylums of the tremendous shout.

There was glory to hear  
In the churches of his tears,  
Under his downy arm you sighed as he struck,  
O you who could not cry  
On the ground when a man died  
Put a tear for joy in the unearthly flood  
And laid your cheek against a cloud-formed shell:  
Now in the dark there is only yourself and myself.

Two proud, blacked brothers cry  
Winter-locked side by side  
To this inhospitable, hollowed year,  
O we who could not stir  
One lean sigh when we heard



Greed on man beating near and fire neighbour  
But wailed and nested in the sky-blue wall  
Now break a giant tear for the little-known fall,

For the drooping of homes  
That did not nurse our bones,  
Brave deaths of only ones but never found,  
Now see, alone in us,  
Our own true strangers' dust  
Ride through the doors of our unentered house.  
Exiled in us we arouse our soft,  
Unclenched, armless, silk-and-rough love that breaks all  
rocks.

## FRANCIS SCARFE

# CONSCRIPT

Delicate ingenuous his quivering blue eye  
Miniatures the horizon of the condemned sky  
Where burns all history in the bones of children  
And fall the tears of remorse and breaks the heart of heaven.

Mothered for pitted dunes and these livid grasses  
He stands on the edge of murder motionless  
As the green statues that to his fame shall moulder  
With love's and death's stone wings touching his shoulder.

While all he meant to live for hides behind  
The click of hell released by his unskilled finger,  
Index of Europe's hand dyed red with honour  
Which wields the boy a puppet of its anger.

Tranquil the thrush sings on the twisted pylon  
Its song unwinding the unbearable pattern  
Of loss, fear, blood, night's aching empty arms,  
Back to the heat of love and the smell of home.

RUTHVEN TODD

VARIOUS ENDS

Sidney, according to report, was kindly hearted  
When stretched upon the field of death;  
And in his gentleness, ignored the blood that spurted,  
Expending the last gutter of his flickering breath.

Marlow, whose raw temper used to rise  
Like boiling milk, went on the booze;  
A quick word and his half-startled eyes  
Mirrored his guts flapping on his buckled shoes.

Swift went crazy in his lonely tower,  
Where blasphemous obscenity paid the warders,  
Who brought a string of visitors every hour  
To see the wild beast, the Dean in holy orders.

And there were those coughed out their sweet soft lungs  
Upon the mountains, or the clear green sea.  
Owen found half-an-ounce of lead with wings;  
And Tennyson died quietly, after tea.

Sam Johnson scissored at the surgeon's stitches  
To drain more poison from his bloated body.  
And Byron may have recalled the pretty bitches,  
Nursing his fevered head in hands unsteady.

De Nerval finished swinging from a grid  
And round his neck the Queen of Sheba's garter.  
Swinburne died of boredom, doing as he was bid,  
And Shelley bobbed lightly on the Mediterranean water.

Rimbaud, his leg grown blue and gross and round,  
Lay sweating for these last weeks on his truckle-bed;  
He could not die—the future was unbroken ground—  
Only Paris, Verlaine and poetry were dead.

Blake had no doubts, his old fingers curled  
Around dear Kate's frail and transparent hand;  
Death merely meant a changing of his world,  
A widening of experience, for him it marked no end.

LAURIE LEE

## WORDS ASLEEP

Now I am still and spent  
and lie in a whited sepulchre  
breathing dead

but there will be  
no lifting of the damp swathes  
no return of blood  
no rolling away the stone

till the cocks carve sharp  
gold scars in the morning  
and carry the stirring sun  
and the early dust to my ears.

*Andalucia* 1936

W. J. TURNER

THE YOUNG AND THE  
OLD

The young are serious but the old are not frivolous,  
They see what they saw in the days of their youth,  
Yet all things appear to them in different proportion.  
Is it wise they have grown or have they measured devotion?  
No, they are the same as they were before,  
But contained like a wave in the welter of the ocean  
To appear and to vanish in the swell of their truth,  
But youth is a billow that breaks on the shore.

The young are passionate but the old are not shallow—  
I speak not of those from whom life has ebbed.  
Violent and strange is a youthful sorrow,  
Age is a seabird whose feet are webbed:  
Smoothed with the touch of every wild billow  
At peace in a curve of the water's uproar,  
Till a balm from the air its truth seems to borrow,  
But youth is a billow that breaks on the shore.

The young are impatient, but the old are not desperate,  
Though they see in the distance the rock which divides.  
And their voyage, they know, was predestined by fate,  
But they, too, determine what fate decides.  
With his ship the sailor forever abides—  
No escape from the doom and the burden he bore!  
Life's lie from its truth age seeks not to sever,  
But youth is a billow that breaks on the shore.

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

FREEDOM AND THE  
WILL TO POWER

I was talking the other day to an American correspondent just back from Scandinavia. Like everyone else who has visited Finland, he was struck by the personal position of Baron Mannerheim. 'It is no use,' he said, 'your talking about his seamy past or his reactionary politics. Like George Washington and Wellington and Clemenceau, he is national leader, in defiance of all the rules. When a country is fighting for its life—or at least so long as the fighting goes on—men will disregard politics and accept leadership if they are lucky enough to have any.' Later in our conversation our talk turned to Sweden, and my friend was trying to describe the paralysis which had numbed its politicians. 'After all,' he added, 'they are social democrats, good routine politicians, but no leaders.'

That odd remark has stuck in my mind ever since. Is there something in the very structure of social democratic parties and of democracies which makes them incapable of the great decisions of war? and going a stage further, is there something in the structure of our Western civilization which forces it to stand on the defensive and to leave to the totalitarian leaders the initiative in world affairs? To answer these questions, one must forget the mutual recriminations of appeasement and collective security, and try to see ourselves as we really are.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, the whole energy of progressives in this country, in France and in America, has been used for nearly two hundred years in an attempt to destroy arbitrary power. Liberalism, whether in the English, the American, or the French Revolution, was concerned not



to replace the despotism of Kings, or landlords or capitalists with a new sovereign power, the popular will, but to make it impossible for anyone to be sovereign. Of course there was always a Left Wing of this Liberal Movement which advocated a terror of the Left, but this revolutionary Left never succeeded in winning the support of the class which should theoretically have done its work. The proletariat has never shown any inclination to become a dictator and has always, when it has thrown up its own organizations, Trade Unions, Co-operatives, etc., displayed a hatred of autocracy even stronger than that of the middle classes. It has wanted 'Law and Order', the recognition of its rights, a fair wage: it has never wanted to assert its will to power.

Anyone who works in the Labour Movement will admit this, however much he may want to explain it away. And the clearest illustration of this innate Liberalism is the suspicion which working people feel of 'power-politics', whether in opponents or in their own leaders, their hatred of 'militarism', their refusal to consider problems of strategy and their belief that war can be abolished by international machinery. Even in Germany, the country where the tradition of authority is most strong, the Social-Democrats, truly expressing the feelings of German trade unionists, preferred constitutional suicide to warlike action against the Nazis. Even in Spain, where revolutionary violence is deeply ingrained, it was the Anarchists, not the Communists, who had a real popular backing.

For two hundred years the peoples of Western Europe, whenever they have become articulate, have struggled for liberty against arbitrary power, have fought wars not to assert their will but to abolish war, and have preferred a reasonable compromise to a glorious victory. And against this natural tendency of common people to constitutional government there has only been one obstacle, the intoxicating power of leadership to summon us to self-immolation for an idea, whether the leader was Napoleon, Lenin or Hitler. Such leadership may and does obtain an enormous popular backing, but it must always assert itself against the natural

inertia of the masses; and it is worth noticing that all the great leaders of war and revolution, though drawing their inspiration from mass-support, have also expressed a contempt for public opinion. This is as true of Marx and Lenin as it is of Hitler and Mussolini. They all knew that if the masses had their way, they would refuse to prosecute the war or fight the revolution through to the end which would give a new minority unlimited power: they all gave the people what was good for them, not what they wanted—and made them like it afterwards.

This is why Liberals and Socialists alike have had such an instinctive suspicion of leadership, and tried to check and control it as far as possible. Their ideal is government designed to prevent the self-assertion of an idea or a personality, by the substitution of the committee for individual responsibility, of the division of power for direct rule, of the party-machine for parliamentary leadership, of the League of Nations for Imperialism. For the most profound sentiment of democrats is their hatred of war. Instead of class-war inside the State, they try to substitute the machinery of peaceful legislation and industrial negotiation; instead of international war, they try to build a system by which committees or courts of law can settle matters quietly by discussion. In spite of all the fulminations of Marxist theorists, the working people have no will to power: on the contrary, their desire is to destroy the will to power, and the first place where they attack it is in their own parties.

I doubt whether we fully realize the influence of this Liberal ideology, especially since 1918. In America and France and Britain it has accomplished a psychological disarmament *not only of the Left but of the Right*. Far more than anyone likes to admit, we have humanized the ruling class by making it attentive to the popular pacific will and by removing from it the power of decisive action. Mr. Chamberlain may be a Machiavellian politician, but if he is, he is a Machiavelli of Liberal Democracy, trained in a school of democratic politics and incapable of those ruthless exercises of power which are the daily routine of Hitler and Stalin. He

is at heart a pacifist, not merely as Marxists argue, because capitalism demands peace, but because our British political institutions do not permit a power-politician to rise to the top. Having established an elaborate system of education, of political machinery, of social ritual, especially designed to discourage the will to power, we cannot be surprised if, in the emergency of war, our leaders display not the qualities of *Macht-politik*, but the caution of the peaceful negotiator. It is the supreme triumph of Democracy to have disarmed and humanized those whose interests conflicted with it: it is the supreme dilemma of Western civilization that, having driven 'the warrior' out of politics, it is now fighting for its life.

Here is one of those knavish tricks of the historical process which Hegel delighted to describe. By civilizing and humanizing the politics of Western Europe, the Liberals and the Social-Democrats have destroyed not only the limitless power of positive evil which the despot possessed, but the power of positive good which Liberalism itself needed to create a sane world order. Refusing to install a terror of the masses or of a new ruling minority, it first immobilized the old powers and then left them in possession. When, in 1918, the Western democracies were triumphant and able to impose their will, their governments behaved neither as ruthless tyrants nor as social revolutionaries. They debated and set up committees and compromised their way into a peace settlement which gave neither themselves security nor their opponents justice. With their will to power had disappeared the sense of responsibility and the vision of a new order. They had 'abolished power-politics' and now relied on democratic procedure to maintain the *status quo*.

That is why the new revolutionary movements which arose from the economic insecurity of the post-war world were bound to be anti-democratic. Democrats had risen in their wrath against the arbitrary power of despotism: now leaders appeared to denounce the arbitrary powerlessness of the democracies. Hitler does not attack Daladier and Chamberlain as monstrous despots, but as '*laute null*', sheer

nonentities, whose cruelty lies in their chronic indecision, their lack of leadership and their will to compromise. His fanatical will to power and his hold on the German people spring from their sufferings under the humane, gentlemanly powerlessness of the Versailles victors. The dialectic of history has decreed that the good will of Liberalism should first tame the owners of power and then produce their revolutionary antithesis—popular movements seeking salvation in ruthless leaders and power-politics.

If my analysis be correct, it would suggest that the democracies will be defeated so long as democrats continue to permit their suspicion of the will to power to render them impotent even to defend civilization. Maybe it is impossible to combine the will to power with the will to emancipation, leadership with responsibility, humanity with courage, self-determination with collective action. In that case, freedom will perish and an epoch of Totalitarian slavery is beginning. I myself cannot accept this conclusion. Faced at last not with the horrid prospect but with the present fact of war, I am convinced that we shall see inside the Western democracies a new synthesis produced by the forces of war. But if this happens, many who cannot face the inevitability of change will believe that civilization and decency have been destroyed. There is no class more conservative of ideas than the intelligentsia, except, perhaps, the politicians, and in the struggle which lies ahead of us the majority of both these classes will oppose any synthesis which necessitates a break with those traditions and procedures whose forms they mistake for the content of freedom. But the break must be made if we are to have a leadership which can both win a war and revive the democratic tradition.

PETER QUENNELL

# THE ROMANTIC CATASTROPHE

BECAUSE Englishmen read the nineteenth-century romantic poets during their most immature, most impressionable and least critical period (when the romantic glorification of youth has a special charm and no real existence can be conceived of beyond the thirties), we have very few of us a clear conception of the romantic achievement and still fewer have attempted to revalue it by adult standards. To make the attempt is both uncomfortable and extremely stimulating. Of the major poetic figures who divide our attention, Coleridge and Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats—Byron for the moment may be excepted, since his chief contribution was personal rather than æsthetic—the latter disappointed us by dying too early, the former by clinging to existence much too long. Just as remarkable as the brilliance of the work they produced was its incompleteness. Youth is the time of unfulfilled aspirations, unkept promises, unachieved desires; and, while trying to analyse the genius of these four very different and all extraordinarily gifted writers, we find that we are perpetually dropping into the conditional tense. Suppose that Shelley had had a worse heart but a better head, and, incidentally, a more sensitive and musical ear . . . suppose that Wordsworth's nature had been more fluid, more resistant to the processes of ossification, and Coleridge's steadier and less diffuse: that Keats had not written with death at his elbow . . . possibility on possibility immediately presents itself. But none of these possibilities was ever realized: over the whole age hangs the shadow of a tremendous *might-have-been*. We are left face to face with the prospect of what actually was; and that prospect is as strangely irregular as it is full of interest.



## THE ROMANTIC CATASTROPHE 329

By June 1822, when Shelley's featureless and decomposing body was scooped up from the sands of Viareggio—his copy of Keats's poems turned back at *Lamia* in the coat pocket—Keats had been dead for seven months. Coleridge and Wordsworth, however, had respectively twelve and twenty-eight years to live; and the decade that followed, for Coleridge at least, was slow and inglorious. Yet, just as Keats, given different circumstances, might by his sheer poetic gift have bridged the gulf between the augustan and romantic traditions, so Coleridge, had his temperament been more happily constituted and the conflict within himself less acute and prolonged, might have dominated the new literature by force of intellect. For Coleridge had two different faculties not often employed in combination. He was both deeply intellectual and intensely imaginative. His mind was both powerful in scope and adapted to the most delicate *minutiae* of poetic observation. He could criticize and create with equal mastery. In estimating the poetic works of others, not only could he dive into the resources of a lifetime's erudition—and he had read, as he frequently announced, 'almost everything'—but he could apply the technical knowledge acquired while producing his own.

Yet his failure was crushing and comprehensive. And here, not for the first time, one is confronted by the paradoxical observation that, although men make up an age, the age itself is contributory in making men. A poet may help to shape the future: he is controlled and shaped, nevertheless, by the immediate past and by the influence with which it bears down upon the present, crystallized in the intangible contemporary 'atmosphere'. Coleridge and Wordsworth belonged to the generation that had been excited, almost beyond endurance, by the events of 1789, troubled and horrified by the growth of the Terror and profoundly stirred by the astonishing spectacle of Napoleon's rise. Some had welcomed, some had shuddered at, the Revolution. But, in both instances, the shock went very deep, and the shocks that followed it were demoralizing and, at length, disabling. Thus Wordsworth receded into a graceless conservatism,

the youth and strength of his imagination gradually losing ground, enthusiasm giving way to arid prejudice. By 1822, and even earlier, he was regarded, along with Southey, as poetic arch-traitor to the Liberal cause and the hireling representative of a Tory government whose principles and pension he had accepted. In Coleridge's development, the effects of contemporary occurrences are perhaps somewhat less easy to discover; but he, too, after a burst of creation at the turn of the century—practically all the poems that deserve to be remembered were written during 1797 and 1798—experienced a curious falling-off of creative strength, till in 1801 he admitted that the poet was dead in him, while the opium-habit began to claim him more and more definitely, soothing his sense of disappointment and lulling his nerves. Fifteen years later he was an acknowledged addict and had retired to Highgate and the refuge of Gillman's household.

Yet opium was not the sole, nor indeed was it the main, cause of Coleridge's failure. Drug-addiction, like chronic alcoholism, is more often a symptom than the disease itself; though the malady of which in Coleridge's case it may have been symptomatic was of a type that baffles analysis and defies cure. In common with many other writers of the early nineteenth century—De Quincey and Baudelaire are examples that immediately come to mind—he suffered from that odd disease of the volition to which mystics have attached the name of *acedia*, a condition of spiritual despondency and mental paralysis that leaves the sufferer still lucid yet entirely impotent. And then, Coleridge had highly developed moral feelings. It is possible that, had those feelings been less highly developed, and his conscience not so squeamish and not so obstreperous, he might have given them fewer occasions to reproach and torment him. But his sense of duty intensified his sense of failure; and it was his sense of failure that, in spite of every prohibition, human or divine, he was obliged to lull by constant recourse to opium which, temporarily at least, reconciled him to his moral predicament. From a conviction of his own unworthiness he

had never been free. At Cambridge it had already begun to haunt him, had ruined his career at the University and driven him first to debauchery, then to enlistment; and, during a much later period, in a letter to Southey, he summed up his tragic obsession once and for all:

'A sense of weakness (he declared), a haunting sense that I was an herbaceous plant, as large as a large tree, with a trunk of the same girth, and branches as large and shadowing, but with pith within the trunk, not heart of wood—that I had power, not strength, an involuntary imposter, that I had no real genius, no depth. This on my honour is as fair a statement of my habitual haunting, as I could give before the tribunal of Heaven. How it arose in me I have but lately discovered; still it works within me, but only as a disease, the cause and meaning of which I know. The whole History of this feeling would form a curious page in a *nosologia spiritualis* . . .'

Disintoxicated, he must justify himself by action. Intoxicated, he found no justification necessary: it was enough that he knew and felt and imagined:

'Laudanum (he told his brother, George Coleridge, in 1798, the year of *Kubla Khan*) gave me repose, not sleep; but you, I believe, know how divine that repose is, what a spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountains and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste sands!'

For Coleridge, in fact, as afterwards for Charles Baudelaire, opium provided an intensification, not so much of sensual as of spiritual experience. It procured the key to one of those *paradis artificiels* that are a visionary equivalent of the tree-embowered, rock-walled garden fastnesses, 'enfolding sunny spots of greenery', where the pupils of the Old Man of the Mountain received their training. But he returned to the real world for the most part with empty hands:

'If a man (he wrote, somewhat pathetically, between 1814 and 1818) could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really

been there, and if he found that flower in his hand when he awoke—Aye! and what then?’

Alas, of the ‘two to three hundred lines’ that formed the original *Kubla Khan*, what with the insubstantial nature of such half-fixed reminiscences and the disastrous arrival of the person from Porlock, only an imperfect recollection was ever salvaged; and the fate of *Kubla Khan* was typical of the fate of his other efforts. Remnants, husks, vestiges found their way to the reader; the essential substance remained with Coleridge to furnish his dream-life, just out of reach on the wrong side of the ivory threshold—huge epic poems, gigantic treatises, exhaustive commentaries,<sup>1</sup> all unattempted though in the mind’s eye vivid and definite. Resolutions piled up till their magnitude terrified him. He groaned—moralized—then slipped back into ruinous reverie.

Coleridge’s plight has been likened to that of Baudelaire; and, in parenthesis, it is interesting to note that the correspondence between certain passages of *The Friend*, resuscitated in *Biographia Literaria*, and the third section of *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*, in *l’Art Romantique*, is very close indeed. ‘To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood (writes Coleridge); to combine the child’s sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar . . . that is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents.’ Similarly, Baudelaire, attempting to define the character of

<sup>1</sup> Besides Coleridge’s projected work on the Logos, in five treatises, and his seven Hymns—to Sun, Moon, Earth, Air, Water, Fire and God, ‘with a large preface or prose commentary each’—there was his epic on the Destruction of Jerusalem, which was to have occupied him no less than twenty years. ‘I should not think (he wrote in 1797) of devoting less than twenty years to an Epic Poem. Ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine—then the *mind of man*—then the *minds of men*—in all Travels, Voyages and Histories. So I would spend ten years—the next five to the composition of the poem—and the five last to the correction of it.’

genius in the person of Constantin Guys, suggests that we should regard the man of genius as an *homme-enfant*—‘a man possessing at every moment of the day the genius of childhood, a man, that is, for whom familiarity has robbed of its brilliance no single aspect of our common life’. For the child (he has already written) everything is *new*: he is always *intoxicated*. Nothing bears a closer affinity to what is called inspiration than the joy with which forms and colours are absorbed by the child. Elsewhere the French poet compares Guys to a man who, spiritually, is always in the condition of a convalescent, reborn after a long illness to the beauty and miraculous strangeness of the world around him. This idea may be paralleled in Coleridge’s text, when he declares that it is ‘the prime merit of genius and its most unequivocal mode of manifestation, so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others . . . that freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental, no less than of bodily, convalescence’. Whether Baudelaire was indebted directly to *Biographia Literaria* I have not yet been able to ascertain; but that such a close connection should exist between Coleridge’s thought and the thought of one of the greatest European poets and most perceptive modern critics shows the boldness and catholicity of his critical insight as it appears again and again in his notebook jottings. But, whereas Baudelaire’s critical work at its best is both compact in design and continuous in inspiration, Coleridge’s is shapeless and fragmentary. Thus, *Biographia Literaria* is not a complete book so much as a brilliant compilation of paragraphs and chapters. The subtlety of Coleridge’s mind involves his method in endless fine entanglements; and (as he himself remarked, in a passage that at once analyses his own weakness and exemplifies the stylistic peculiarities to which that weakness led) ‘My illustrations swallow up my thesis. I feel too intensely the omnipresence of all in each, platonically speaking; or, psychologically, my brain-fibres, or the spiritual light which abides in the brain-marrow, as visible light appears to do in sundry rotten mackerel and other *smashy* matters, is of too general an affinity with all

things, and though it perceives the *difference* of things, yet is eternally pursuing the likenesses. . . .<sup>1</sup> A preoccupation with some particular image or class of images is to be found in the work of most great poets and often serves as a clue to some individual turn of mind; and it is perhaps noteworthy that the pallid unreal glimmer of phosphorescent light, whether in a dead fish, the stagnant ocean that burned round the Ancient Mariner's becalmed vessel, or as he had himself admired it during a Mediterranean voyage<sup>1</sup>, had a particularly moving effect on Coleridge's fancy. The ceaseless agitations of his own mind were as flickering and flamelike, appearing, vanishing, but still renewed. They threw off as much brilliance and as little heat.

He regarded himself as a failure and his contemporaries agreed with him. Shelley had drawn his poetic likeness in 1820:

You will see Coleridge—he who sits obscure  
In the exceeding lustre and the pure  
Intense irradiation of a mind,  
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,  
Flags wearily through darkness and despair . . .

Yet Coleridge, notwithstanding the tragic diffusion and gradual dispersion of his creative gifts, had the kind of maturity to which Shelley could not aspire and a critical clear-sightedness beyond an enthusiast's scope. The enemies that Coleridge dreaded were those within himself. Shelley's adolescent persecution-mania filled the world with bogeys which assumed now the lineaments of Sir Timothy Shelley, now the pale murderous mask of wicked Lord Castlereagh (that domestic despot but singularly enlightened director of English foreign policy) and now emerged, crudely personified, as Priestcraft and Prejudice. Half the foes he engaged

<sup>1</sup> 'A beautiful white cloud of Foam at momentary intervals coursed by the side of the Vessel with a Roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out with it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam dashed off from the vessel's side, each with its own small constellation, over the Sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar Troop over a wilderness.'

were of his own creation: half the sufferings he endured were self-provoked: and among real opponents he was a desperate but a random hitter. His verse has the same touch of sketchy enthusiasm. The orchestral accompaniment of *Prometheus Unbound* may be supplied by the spheres; but the celestial clockwork is not revolving very smoothly. The voice may be that of an archangel; but, now and then, it cracks on the top register and the result is a singularly appalling dissonance:

*The Moon*    Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest  
                  I must hurry, whirl and follow  
                  Through the heavens wide and hollow,  
                  Sheltered by the warm embrace  
                  Of thy soul from hungry space,  
                  Drinking from thy sense and sight  
                  Beauty, majesty and might,  
                  As a lover or a chameleon  
                  Grows like what it looks upon,  
                  As a violet's gentle eye  
                  Gazes on the azure sky . . .

*The Earth*    . . . Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight  
                  Falls on me like thy clear and tender light  
                  Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,  
                  Through isles for ever calm;  
                  Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce  
                  The caverns of my pride's deep universe,  
                  Charming the tiger joy, whose trappings fierce  
                  Made wounds which need thy balm.

Many passages even worse than this—more unmusical, more confused and more confusing, more clogged with imagery and muddled in metaphor—might be selected from the products of Shelley's maturity. They are obscure, not as poets of the seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries were often obscure, through undue condensation of meaning, but because the substance of meaning has been beaten out too fine—with no sort of regard for its poetic value—and trembles and shudders ecstatically like a sheet of tin-foil.



Shelley confused ecstasy and imagination, just as in the field of politics he confused the hatred of 'tyranny' (which may have a private psychological basis) with a defence of the intellectual principles on which freedom has been established. Indeed, his liberalism never quite emerged from the period when, accompanied by the pretty stupid girl whom he had 'rescued' from her boarding school, he attempted to launch an English revolution with the help of paper boats, handbills scattered fancifully from high windows and messages in bottles committed to the waves. His genius is most apparent when he is least declamatory, when he forgets the helter-skelter rush of rhetorical abstractions that went streaming through his mind, 'Kings of suns and stars, Daemons and Gods, Aetherial Dominations . . .', gleaming like meteors, blazing like planets, and comes home to the self and the self's perplexities, its loves and its disappointments, the beauty and the misery of a finite universe. Keats's famous reproof was certainly merited. But then, Keats had already arrived at a balance between the imagination and the intellect—or between the creative and critical aspects of an artist's brain—that Shelley's temperament debarred him from ever achieving. It was his business (Keats knew) to create, not legislate. But nothing could be further from the selfish secluded æstheticism in which the deliberately non-political artist (supported by a small private income) is supposed to pass his days than Keats's dedication of all his powers to the intellectual purpose that suited them best and through which they could be exploited to the greatest advantage. It is our misfortune, however, that the *Letters*, which outline his plan of campaign, should show him usually a step ahead of the campaign itself and that even the Odes should strike us, here and there, as an anticlimax.

Yet few poets have accomplished such a remarkable process of self-clarification in so short a space of time.

Sensibly, Keats refused to regret 'the slipshod *Endymion*. That it is so (he told a correspondent only six months after its publication) is no fault of mine. No!—though it may sound a little paradoxical. It is as good as I had power to

make it—by myself. Had I been nervous about its being a perfect piece, and with that view asked advice, and trembled over every page, it would not have been written; for it is not in my nature to fumble—I will write independently—I have written independently *without Judgment*. I may write independently, and *with Judgment*, hereafter. The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man: It cannot be matured by law and precept, but by sensation and watchfulness . . . That which is creative must create itself.' And *Endymion*, though so evidently the product of an adolescent artist, in love with the idea of writing poetry and somewhat befuddled by an over-dose of the Elizabethans, has still movements of astonishing ease and amplitude:

. . . As when heaved anew  
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,  
Down whose green back the short-lived foam, all hoar,  
Bursts gradual with a wayward indolence.

To re-read Keats's *Letters*, having not looked into them for several years, is an experience at once delightful and disconcerting. So much naivety coexists with so much maturity, so much vulgarity with so much delicacy of imagination. Here is the suburban poetaster, prolific of schoolboy puns, who collaborated with his friend Brown in painfully facetious letters to Mrs. Dilke and, accompanied by other Cockney sportsmen—we think immediately of a Cruikshank caricature!—scoured Hampstead Heath in pursuit of hedgerow game and went home to tea after bagging a tom-tit; and here, embodied in the same person—unselfconsciously sharing the honours upon almost every page—is a writer of adult seriousness and profound intelligence. His mind was peculiarly honest and utterly disinterested. 'I never wrote one single line of Poetry (he declared in April 1818) with the least shadow of public thought.' The most imperfect and irresponsible artists (he realized) are those afflicted with a strong sense of public responsibility or public self-importance; and, just as the individual must have begun to understand himself and grasp his own limitations before he

can hope to interfere beneficially in the existence of others, so the artist must graduate through self-absorption into any extended sympathy with contemporary problems or the world around him. This Keats had deliberately set out to do, holding that the benefits conferred by man on man are 'trifles in comparison to the benefit done by great works to the "Spirit and pulse" of good by their mere passive existence'. It was not that he lacked human interest or human affection. Indeed, contact with other human beings often absorbed him so entirely that 'when I am in a room with people . . . the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated—not only among men; it would be the same in a nursery of children'.

A writer may have too few interests—but also too many. The engine that he employs against the world is necessarily himself; and it is his first duty, therefore, to determine the capacities of that delicate and mysterious apparatus, and by carefully limiting them to define the exact scope of their future activities. Since neither poet consented to undertake this preliminary survey, Shelley's sympathies were as wide, general and ultimately ineffective as the verse that expressed them was often weak and shrill; and Coleridge's speculations were ambitious but futile. Contrast with the achievement and partial failure of his fellow romantic poets, Keats's belief in what he called '*Negative Capability*'—of which Shakespeare, he thought, provided the chief example and the tremendous justification:

' . . . that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge.'

And elsewhere:

'Now it appears to me that almost any Man may, like the spider, spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel—the

points of leaves and twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip the fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury. But the Minds of Mortals are so different and bent on such diverse journeys that it may at first appear impossible for any common taste or fellowship to exist between two or three under these suppositions. It is, however, quite the contrary. Minds would leave each other in contrary directions, traverse each other in numberless points, and at last greet each other at the journey's end. . . Man should not dispute or assert, but whisper results to his neighbour. . . .'

There is a great gulf between the poet who, at the age of twenty-four, had decided that 'the only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts, not a select party', and poets who turned their minds into packed committee rooms or, like Coleridge, into debating societies with a single speaker. Keats's nature was entirely innocent of the taint of didacticism; and for that reason alone his conception of poetry seems both more modern than the definitions attempted by many nineteenth-century critics, and also closer to the spirit of the previous age. No augustan poet need have dissented from his view that 'poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance'. And Johnson himself might certainly have agreed that 'its touches of beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless, instead of content. The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him, shine over him, and set soberly, although in magnificence, leaving him in the luxury of twilight'.

What happened to prevent the execution of so bold a design? The student of Keats's *Letters* feels that he is

witnessing a tragedy where the enemies of perfection in art and of happiness in life, repulsed along the whole length of a poet's defences, suddenly re-emerge, disguised, behind the ramparts. To begin with, there is talk of the 'sore throat' that followed the Scottish and Irish walking tours of 1818. Then there occurs a casual mention of the daughter of the lady who had moved in next door—her countenance attractive but wanting in 'sentiment', her nostrils 'fine—though a little painful', her mouth 'bad and good', her profile 'better than her full face', her entire personality fascinating but perplexing, 'beautiful and elegant, graceful, silly, fashionable and strange'. Under such travesties may death and love make their first appearance. The 'sore throat' proves impossible to shake off, soon it becomes clear that the disease that had removed Tom Keats is also sapping at the constitution of his elder brother. During the October of that fatal year 1818, the poet had explained to George and Georgiana Keats that he hoped never to marry, that his imagination was strengthening day by day, and that with imaginative strength increased the desire for solitude; but gradually the idea of Fanny Brawne grows more and more powerful. From that moment, death and love work as malicious allies. The earliest letter to Fanny Brawne is dated July 8th 1819; and, as approaching death rapidly speeds up the tempo, the tone adopted mounts in intensity and gains in bitterness. Yet Keats continued to fight a rearguard action. Towards the end of August 1819 he could still write to Taylor, when discussing the financial advantages of a popular success, that he equally disliked 'the favour of the public with the love of a woman', since both were 'a cloying treacle to the wings of Independence': and to his brother, on the 17th of the following month, that nothing struck him 'so forcibly with a sense of the ridiculous as love. A man in love I do think cuts the sorriest figure in the world . . .'

Again and again he affirmed his desire for that condition of moral and spiritual independence in which, he believed, great poetry must find its origin. Deliberately he would deny himself disturbing contacts and hurry through London

without a visit to Hampstead, because 'I cannot resolve to mix any pleasure with my days. . . . I am a Coward, I cannot bear the pain of being happy . . .' Very clearly he could see his life as it ought to have been, and only after a prolonged struggle did he abandon himself to his fate as it was. Finally, physical weakness had spoiled his triumph. Death had at once intensified the claims of life and made them impossible either to satisfy in terms of the body or relegate to their proper place in the world of the mind. 'I think (he wrote) if I had a free and healthy and lasting organisation of heart, and lungs as strong as an ox's, so as to be able to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation without weariness, I could pass my life very nearly alone though it should last eighty years'—But the lungs were riddled with disease and the heart disordered: the fortifications that had guarded his solitude were breaking down: the time had gone when he could postpone voluntarily his chances of happiness. 'I cannot exist without you. I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again—my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me', he told Fanny Brawne on October 13th; '. . . Love is my Religion . . .' The sole reward of that religious cult was a consuming jealousy.

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If Keats was a writer who, although not insensitive to the life of his time, was sufficiently strong to withstand its more malignant influences, Coleridge, Shelley, Wordsworth represent the plight of the intellectual in modern society from three widely separated but complementary points of view. Wordsworth is the type of artist who, after an early expedition into revolutionary experiment, allows himself, for reasons part economic and part personal, to drift back to conservatism once the tide has turned. His was the warm nature easily chilled, the magnanimous spirit strangely susceptible to specious argument, cursed with an instinctive appreciation of the main chance, that in every generation is held up to obloquy. Their former associates may revile such

artists: but their pride increases. Too intelligent not to see 'both sides of the question', they lose their youth, their inspiration and at last their integrity in the labyrinth they have created round their own self-love. To the evasions and circumlocutions of middle-age they still bring the obstinacy and the conceit of youth. They are the arch-renegades who remain unconscious of their own apostasy.

Very different was the spiritual doom of Coleridge, whose predicament seems to have reproduced in waking life an experience we have most of us undergone during the course of a nightmare. Then, as the necessity of making some immediate and drastic move becomes more and more apparent, so does the sensation of complete impotence grow more and more powerful. All Coleridge's vices derived from his virtues. It was the fact that he could imagine with such lucidity, and analyse and discuss with such an easy strength, that made it at first difficult, and afterwards quite impossible, to desert the ideal world of reverie and speculation for the disturbing, imperfect world of action. As Shelley said, he had been blinded by an excess of light; as he himself remarked, his illustrations swallowed up his thesis; till every advance in thought became a retreat from reality, and every improvement in the theory of how books should be written a diminution of the ability to set pen to paper. The need—if not the desire—to create had gradually drained away. Between his sensitiveness and a universe which, since the breakdown of his early revolutionary enthusiasms and the collapse of his existence as a husband and father, he had discovered that he could neither like nor understand, he raised the massive barrier of his intellect and his erudition. Raiding parties might break through that Wall of China—he was seldom secure from harassing reminders of the real and actual world; but he could subdue them with the dazzling ray of his superb intelligence, re-cast them in a more agreeable guise, reduce them to abstract terms. It was a system of self-protection that needed constant vigilance. It left little time for the creation of poetic literature.

Shelley no one could have accused of sparing his own

sensitiveness; but, because he was enthusiastic rather than critical, and lacked any aptitude for self-discovery, he never succeeded in giving life and literature their respective dues. The connection of Shelley's love for his sister, and consequent hatred of his father, with his detestation of Prejudice, Priestcraft, Tyranny, is so clear as to demand little additional emphasis. A wrong-headed or foolish man may produce magnificent verse; but a poet who is both high-minded and muddle-headed, and feels the impact of emotion without knowing its origin, mistakes excitement for the faculty of inspiration and emphasis for the gift of poetic clarity. Through a contemplation of the careers of such poets as Shelley, and through the services of such biographers as Thomas Jefferson Hogg—anxious to admire but determined to patronize—we have arrived at that identification of Youth and Poetry, according to which every true poet is an adolescent and true poetry is a bye-product of immature feeling rather than a considered statement of our adult discoveries. Shelley's revolt against the age he lived in—an age of industrial growth and political retrogression—would have been more effective had its origins been less confused and his view of the poet's functions been less didactic—had he been content (in Keats's phrase) to sit like Jupiter instead of constituting himself a kind of celestial busybody. His liberalism, though bold and generous in its expression, rested on a basis that was so insecure as to give a strained uneasy note to his poetic utterance. His choric verse has a breathless speed that is occasionally beautiful: it lacks the 'comprehension and expansion' of the greatest literature.

At last the stage is cleared for the appearance of Byron. Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge were all of them devoted men of letters, unselfishly absorbed in their self-appointed task; Byron represents the intrusion of the brilliant amateur. It was at once the secret of his enormous popular success and the measure of his æsthetic limitations that he should rely so completely on the guidance of instinct. His capacity for deliberate reasoning was not impressive: but, as Goethe once observed, in an often-quoted passage of



the *Conversations with Eckermann*, though he understood himself but dimly, he possessed 'a high degree of that daemonic instinct and attraction which influences others independently of reason, effort or affection, which sometimes succeeds in guiding where the understanding fails'. In life and literature he was an unrepentant, indeed an almost unselfconscious, egotist; but, whereas Keats might progress through a knowledge of himself to a love and understanding of the world around him, for Byron the self was circumambient—something he could no more escape from than he could escape from his destiny. Both his greatness and his littleness were on the same conspicuous scale; and it is our misfortune that his talents should have been sufficiently dazzling to lend a false dignity to the weaker side of his literary character. His conception of poetry was crude and straightforward. Verse, he said, was the 'lava of the imagination'—its canalization into literature prevented its overflow—and, elsewhere, that it was the 'dream of his sleeping passions', the direct image of some experience he had actually lived through. The poet, in fact, above all other things, must be a Personality!

Few personalities have more than a pathological interest; and it is to Byron's disastrous influence on modern literature that we owe the whole tribe of gifted exhibitionists, ranging in scope from Alfred de Musset to Dowson, who have attempted to 'live' their poems as well as write them. Contrast Byron's deliberate exploitation of the poetic rôle with Keats's analysis of the artist's character, and once again we return to the regions of *might-have-been*. 'As to the poetical character . . .' (Keats wrote during October 1818), 'it has no self—It is everything and nothing . . . It enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, rich or poor, mean or elevated.—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet . . . A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity—he is continually . . . filling some other body. The Sun, the Moon, the Sea, and men and women, who are

creatures of impulse, are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures . . .'

Had Byron's daemonic example been somewhat less overwhelming, and Keats's lonely voice more sustained and more powerful, how great might have been the benefit to modern poetry and how significant the results that it at length achieved! How different, perhaps, the whole face of contemporary Europe! Nationalism was essentially a romantic movement, and from nationalism springs the half-baked racial theorist with his romantic belief in the superiority of Aryan blood and his romantic distrust of the use of reason. So far-reaching were the effects of the romantic revival that they still persist even in shapes under which they are no longer recognized and among writers who have learned to profess themselves devoutly classicist. For romantic literature appeals to that strain of anarchism which inhabits a dark corner of every human mind and is continually advancing the charms of extinction against the claims of life—the beauty of all that is fragmentary and youthful and half-formed as opposed to the compact achievement of adult genius. The augustan spirit is positive, logical, limited; the romantic mood, masochistic and self-destructive. It was the horrid destiny of the nineteenth-century romantic movement to be born under the twin signs of Youth and Death.

# FRANK RICHARDS

## REPLIES

### TO GEORGE ORWELL

THE Editor has kindly given me space to reply to Mr. Orwell, whose article on Boys' Weeklies appeared in *Horizon* No. 3. Mr. Orwell's article is a rather remarkable one to appear in a periodical of this kind. From the fact that *Horizon* contains a picture that does not resemble a picture, a poem that does not resemble poetry, and a story that does not resemble a story, I conclude that it must be a very high-browed paper indeed: and I was agreeably surprised, therefore, to find in it an article written in a lively and entertaining manner, and actually readable. I was still more interested as this article dealt chiefly with my work as an author for boys. Mr. Orwell perpetrates so many inaccuracies, however, and flicks off his condemnations with so careless a hand, that I am glad of an opportunity to set him right on a few points. He reads into my very innocent fiction a fell scheme for drugging the minds of the younger proletariat into dull acquiescence in a system of which Mr. Orwell does not approve: and of which, in consequence, he cannot imagine anyone else approving except from interested motives. Anyone who disagrees with Mr. Orwell is necessarily either an antiquated ass or an exploiter on the make! His most serious charge against my series is that it smacks of the year 1910: a period which Mr. Orwell appears to hold in peculiar horror. Probably I am older than Mr. Orwell: and I can tell him that the world went very well then. It has not been improved by the Great War, the General Strike, the outbreak of sex-chatter, by make-up or lipstick, by the present discontents, or by Mr. Orwell's thoughts upon the present discontents! But Mr. Orwell not only reads a diehard dunder-headed Tory into a harmless author for boys: he accuses

him of plagiarism, of snobbishness, of being out of date, even of cleanliness of mind, as if that were a sin also. I propose to take Mr. Orwell's indictment charge by charge, rebutting the same one after another, excepting the last, to which I plead guilty. After which I expect to receive from Mr. Orwell a telegram worded like that of the invader of Sind.

To begin with the plagiarism. 'Probably', says Mr. Orwell, '*The Magnet* owes something to Gunby Hadath, Desmond Coke, and the rest.' Frank Richards had never read Desmond Coke till the nineteen-twenties: he had never read Gunby Hadath—whoever Gunby Hadath may be—at all. 'Even the name of the chief comic among the Greyfriars masters, Mr. Prout, is taken from Stalky and Co.', declares Mr. Orwell. Now, it is true that there is a form-master at Greyfriars named Prout, and there is a house-master in Stalky named Prout. It is also true that *The Magnet* author is named Richards: and that there is a Richards in Stalky and Co. But the Fifth-form master at Greyfriars no more derives from the Stalky Prout, than *The Magnet* author from the Stalky Richards. Stalky's Prout is a 'gloomy ass', worried, dubious, easily worked on by others. The Greyfriars Prout is portly, self-satisfied, impervious to the opinions of others. No two characters could be more unlike. Mr. Prout of Greyfriars is a very estimable gentleman: and characters in a story, after all, must have names. Every name in existence has been used over and over again in fiction.

The verb 'to jape', says Mr. Orwell, is also taken from Stalky. Mr. Orwell is so very modern, that I cannot suspect him of having read anything so out of date as Chaucer. But if he will glance into that obsolete author, he will find 'jape' therein, used in precisely the same sense. 'Frabjous' also, it seems, is borrowed from Stalky! Has Mr. Orwell never read 'Alice'? 'Frabjous', like 'chortle' and 'burble', derives from Lewis Carroll. Innumerable writers have borrowed 'frabjous' and 'chortle'—I believe Frank Richards was the first to borrow 'burble', but I am not sure of this: such

expressions, once in existence, become part of the language, and are common property.

'Sex', says Mr. Orwell, 'is completely tabu'. Mr. Noel Coward, in his autobiography, is equally amused at the absence of the sex-motif in *The Magnet* series. But what would Mr. Orwell have? *The Magnet* is intended chiefly for readers up to sixteen: though I am proud to know that it has readers of sixty! It is read by girls as well as boys. Would it do these children good, or harm, to turn their thoughts to such matters? Sex, certainly, does enter uncomfortably into the experience of the adolescent. But surely the less he thinks about it, at an early age, the better. I am aware that, in these 'modern' days, there are people who think that children should be told things of which in my own childhood no small person was ever allowed to hear. I disagree with this entirely. My own opinion is that such people generally suffer from disordered digestions, which cause their minds to take a nasty turn. They fancy that they are 'realists', when they are only obscene. They go grubbing in the sewers for their realism, and refuse to believe in the grass and flowers above ground—which, nevertheless, are equally real! Moreover, this 'motif' does not play so stupendous a part in real life, among healthy and wholesome people, as these 'realists' imagine. If Mr. Orwell supposes that the average Sixth-form boy cuddles a parlour-maid as often as he handles a cricket-bat, Mr. Orwell is in error.

Drinking and smoking and betting, says Mr. Orwell, are represented as 'shady', but at the same time 'irresistibly fascinating'. If Mr. Orwell will do me the honour of looking over a few numbers of *The Magnet*, he will find that such ways are invariably described as 'dingy'—even the 'bad hats' are a little ashamed of them: even Billy Bunter, though he will smoke a cigarette if he can get one for nothing, is described as being, though an ass, not ass enough to spend his money on such things. I submit that the adjective 'dingy' is not equivalent to the adjective 'fascinating'.

Mr. Orwell finds it difficult to believe that a series running for thirty years can possibly have been written by one and

the same person. In the presence of such authority, I speak with diffidence: and can only say that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am only one person, and have never been two or three.

'Consequently,' says Mr. Orwell, cheerfully proceeding from erroneous premises to a still more erroneous conclusion, 'they must be written in a style that is easily imitated.' On this point, I may say that I could hardly count the number of authors who have striven to imitate Frank Richards, not one of whom has been successful. The style, whatever its merits or demerits, is my own, and—if I may say it with due modesty—inimitable. Nobody has ever written like it before, and nobody will ever write like it again. Many have tried; but as Dryden—an obsolete poet, Mr. Orwell—has remarked:

The builders were with want of genius curst,  
The second building was not like the first.

Mr. Orwell mentions a number of other papers, which—egregiously—he classes with *The Magnet*. These papers, with the exception of *The Gem*, are not in the same class. They are not in the same street. They are hardly in the same universe. With *The Magnet*, it is not a case of *primus inter pares*: it is a case of Eclipse first and the rest nowhere. Mr. Orwell in effect admits this. He tells us, quite correctly, that Billy Bunter is a 'real creation': that he is a 'first-rate character': that he is 'one of the best-known in English fiction'. He tells us that in *The Magnet* the 'characters are so carefully graded, as to give every type of reader a character he can identify himself with'. I suggest that an author who can do this is not easily imitated. It is not so easy as Mr. Orwell supposes. It cannot be acquired: only the born story-teller can do it. Shakespeare could do it as no man ever did it before or since. Dickens could do it. Thackeray could not do it. Scott, with all his genius, could only give us historical suits of clothes with names attached. Can Bernard Shaw make a character live? Could Ibsen or Tchekov? To

the highbrow, I know, a writer need only have a foreign name, to be a genius: and the more unpronounceable the name, the greater the genius. These duds—yes, Mr. Orwell, Frank Richards really regards Shaw, Ibsen, and Tchekov, as duds—these duds would disdain to draw a schoolboy. Billy Bunter, let us admit, is not so dignified a character as an imbecile Russian, or a nerve-racked Norwegian. But, as a nineteenth-century writer, whom Mr. Orwell would not deign to quote, remarked, ‘I would rather have a Dutch peasant by Teniers than his Majesty’s head on a signpost’.

Mr. Orwell accuses Frank Richards of snobbishness: apparently because he makes an aristocratic character act as an aristocrat should. Now, although Mr. Orwell may not suspect it, the word ‘aristocrat’ has not wholly lost its original Greek meaning. It is an actual fact that, in this country at least, noblemen generally are better fellows than commoners. My own acquaintance with titled Nobs is strictly limited; but it is my experience, and I believe everybody’s, that—excepting the peasant-on-the-land class, which is the salt of the earth—the higher you go up in the social scale the better you find the manners, and the more fixed the principles. The fact that old families almost invariably die out in the long run is proof of this: they cannot and will not do the things necessary for survival. All over the country, old estates are passing into new hands. Is this because Sir George up at the Hall is inferior to Mr. Thompson from the City—or otherwise? Indeed, Mr. Thompson himself is improved by being made a lord. Is it not a fact that, when a title is bestowed on some hard man of business, it has an ameliorating effect on him—that he reacts unconsciously to his new state, and becomes rather less of a Gradgrind, rather more a man with a sense of his social responsibilities? Everyone must have observed this. The founder of a new family follows, at a distance, in the footsteps of the old families; and every day and in every way becomes better and better! It was said of old that the English nation dearly loves a lord. The English nation, in that as in other things, is wiser than its highbrowed instructors. Really, Mr. Orwell, is it

snobbish to give respect where respect is due: or should an author, because he doesn't happen to be a peer himself, inspire his readers with envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness?

But Mr. Orwell goes on to say that the working-classes enter only as comics and semi-villains. This is sheer perversity on Mr. Orwell's part. Such misrepresentation would not only be bad manners, but bad business. Every paper desiring a wide circulation must circulate, for the greater part, among the working-classes, for the simple reason that they form nine-tenths of the population. A paper that is so fearfully aristocratic that it is supported only by marquises and men-servants must always go the way of the *Morning Post*. *Horizon*, I do not doubt, has a circle of readers with the loftiest brows; but I do doubt whether Sir John Simon will bother it very much for the sinews of war. Indeed, I have often wondered how so many young men with expansive foreheads and superior smiles contrive to live at all on bad prose and worse poetry. Directors, editors, and authors, must live: and they cannot live by insulting the majority of their public. If Frank Richards were the snob Mr. Orwell believes him to be, he would still conceal that weakness very carefully when writing for *The Magnet*. But a man can believe that the 'tenth possessor of a foolish face' has certain qualities lacking in the first possessor of a sly brain, without being a snob. I am very pleased to be an author, and I think I would rather be an author than a nobleman; but I am not fool enough to think that an author is of such national importance as a farmer or a farm labourer. Workmen can, and often do, get on quite well without authors; but no author could continue to exist without the workmen. They are not only the backbone of the nation: they *are* the nation: all other classes being merely trimmings. The best and noblest-minded man I ever knew was a simple wood-cutter. I would like Mr. Orwell to indicate a single sentence in which Frank Richards refers disrespectfully to the people who keep him in comfort. There are three working-class boys in the Greyfriars Remove; Mr. Orwell mentions all



three by name: each one is represented as being liked and respected by the other boys; each in turn has been selected as the special hero of a series: and Mr. Orwell must have used a very powerful microscope to detect anything comic or semi-villainous in them.

It is true that if I introduce a public-house loafer, I do not make him a baronet: and the billiard-marker does not wear an old school tie. But something, surely, is due to reality: especially as Mr. Orwell is such a realist. If Mr. Orwell has met public-house loafers who are baronets, or billiard-markers wearing the old school tie, I have never had a similar experience.

Of strikes, slumps, unemployment, etc., complains Mr. Orwell, there is no mention. But are these really subjects for young people to meditate upon? It is true that we live in an insecure world: but why should not youth feel as secure as possible? It is true that burglars break into houses: but what parent in his senses would tell a child that a masked face may look in at the nursery window? A boy of fifteen or sixteen is on the threshold of life: and life is a tough proposition; but will he be better prepared for it by telling him how tough it may possibly be? I am sure that the reverse is the case. Gray—another obsolete poet, Mr. Orwell!—tells us that sorrows never come too late, and happiness too swiftly flies. Let youth be happy, or as happy as possible. Happiness is the best preparation for misery, if misery must come. At least, the poor kid will have had something! He may, at twenty, be hunting for a job and not finding it—why should his fifteenth year be clouded by worrying about that in advance? He may, at thirty, get the sack—why tell him so at twelve? He may, at forty, be a wreck on Labour's scrap-heap—but how will it benefit him to know that at fourteen? Even if making miserable children would make happy adults, it would not be justifiable. But the truth is that the adult will be all the more miserable if he was miserable as a child. Every day of happiness, illusory or otherwise—and most happiness is illusory—is so much to the good. It will help to give the boy confidence and hope. Frank Richards tells him

that there are some splendid fellows in a world that is, after all, a decent sort of place. He likes to think himself like one of these fellows, and is happy in his day-dreams. Mr. Orwell would have him told that he is a shabby little blighter, his father an ill-used serf, his world a dirty, muddled, rotten sort of show. I don't think it would be fair play to take his twopence for telling him that!

Now about patriotism: an affronting word to Mr. Orwell. I am aware, of course, that the really 'modern' highbrow is an 'idiot who praises with enthusiastic tone, all centuries but this, and every country but his own'. But is a country necessarily inferior because it is one's own? Why should not a fellow feel proud of things in which a just pride may be taken? I have lived in many countries, and talked in several languages: and found something to esteem in every country I have visited. But I have never seen any nation the equal of my own. Actually, such is my belief, Mr. Orwell!

The basic political assumptions, Mr. Orwell goes on, are two: that nothing ever changes, and that foreigners are funny. Well, the French have a proverb that the more a thing changes, the more it is just the same. Temporary mutations are mistaken for great changes—as they always were. Decency seems to have gone—but it will come in again, and there will be a new generation of men who do not talk and write muck, and women with clean faces. Progress, I believe, goes on: but it moves to slow time. No real change is perceptible in the course of a single lifetime. But even if changes succeeded one another with kaleidoscopic rapidity, the writer for young people should still endeavour to give his young readers a sense of stability and solid security, because it is good for them, and makes for happiness and peace of mind.

As for foreigners being funny, I must shock Mr. Orwell by telling him that foreigners *are* funny. They lack the sense of humour which is the special gift of our own chosen nation: and people without a sense of humour are always unconsciously funny. Take Hitler, for example,—with his swastika, his 'good German sword', his fortifications named

after characters from Wagner, his military coat that he will never take off till he marches home victorious: and the rest of his fripperies out of the property-box. In Germany they lap this up like milk, with the most awful seriousness; in England, the play-acting ass would be laughed out of existence. Take Mussolini—can anyone imagine a fat man in London talking the balderdash that Benito talks in Rome to wildly-cheering audiences, without evoking, not wild cheers, but inextinguishable laughter? But is il Duce regarded as a mountebank in Italy? Very far from it. I submit to Mr. Orwell that people who take their theatricals seriously *are* funny. The fact that Adolf Hitler is deadly dangerous does not make him less comic.

But what I dislike most is Mr. Orwell telling me that I am out of date. Human nature, Mr. Orwell, is dateless. A character that lives is always up to date. If, as Mr. Orwell himself says, a boy in 1940 can identify himself with a boy in *The Magnet*, obviously that boy in *The Magnet* is a boy of 1940.

But it is quite startling to see what Mr. Orwell regards as up to date. The one theme that is really new, quoth he, is the scientific one—death-rays, Martian invasions, invisible men, interplanetary rockets, and so on. Oh, my Hat! if Mr. Orwell will permit that obsolete expression. This kind of thing was done, and done to death, when I was a small boy; long before *The Magnet* was born or thought of. Before I reached the age of unaided reading, a story was read to me by an elder brother, in which bold travellers hiked off to the moon, packed inside a big bullet discharged from a tremendous gun. The greatest of submarine stories—Jules Verne's 20,000 *Leagues*—was published before I was born. The Martians invaded the earth, while I was still mewling and puking in the nurse's arms. In the nursery I knew the Invisible Man, though his invisibility was then due to a cloak of darkness. More than twenty years ago I wrote a death-ray story myself: but did not fancy that it was a new idea; even then it had an ancient and fish-like smell. Some of my earliest reading was of flying: there was a strenuous

character in those days, who sailed the skies in what he called an aeronef: a direct descendant, I think, of Verne's *Clipper of the Clouds* of twenty years earlier: and Verne, I fancy, had read *Peter Wilkins* of seventy years earlier still; and I believe that the author of *Peter Wilkins* had not disdained to pick up a tip or two from Swift's writings in the eighteenth century. Did not Lucien tell them something about a trip to the moon in the second century? The oldest flying story I have read was written in Greek about three thousand years ago; but I don't suppose it was the earliest: I have no doubt that when they finish sorting over the Babylonian bricks they will find a flying story somewhere among the ruins, and very likely a death-ray and an invisible man keeping it company. If this stuff is new, Mr. Orwell, what is old?

To conclude, Mr. Orwell hopes that a boys' paper with a Left-wing bias may not be impossible. I hope that it is, and will remain, impossible. Boys' minds ought not to be disturbed and worried by politics. Even if I were a Socialist, or a Communist, I should still consider it the duty of a boys' author to write without reference to such topics: because his business is to entertain his readers, make them as happy as possible, give them a feeling of cheerful security, turn their thoughts to healthy pursuits, and above all to keep them away from unhealthy introspection, which in early youth can do only harm. If there is a Tchekov among my readers, I fervently hope that the effect of *The Magnet* will be to turn him into a Bob Cherry!

# STEPHEN SPENDER

## SEPTEMBER JOURNAL

(concluded)

SEPTEMBER 11TH

I HAD lunch with Tom Eliot a few days ago at his club. The stupid thing is that I can hardly remember anything of what he said. I remember that we had cheese, which he chose. We each had a half of draught beer. He smoked his French cigarettes. He was gentle and courteous as he always is, and he talked freely. He asked me what I was doing, and I said, I think, writing my posthumous works, and that I wasn't taking any official job. He said, 'I think it's very important that as many writers as possible should remain detached, and not have any official position.' I mentioned that I had sent my name to the Ministry of Information and the War Office, but had had no reply. He had done ditto to the F. O. and had also had no reply.

He said it was very important that one should, at all costs, go on writing now. 'It doesn't seem to me to matter very much whether, at the moment, it is or isn't very good. The important thing is to keep going. Probably it's impossible to do excellent work while things are so disturbed.'

I mentioned that I hadn't been able to work, so had started this journal. He said: 'Yes, that's an excellent idea. Just writing every day is a way of keeping the engine running, and then something good may come out of it.'

We talked a little about Joyce. 'If he wrote anything now, it would have to be so entirely different from *Finnegan's Wake*, that one can easily imagine that the reorganization of his whole way of thinking would be too much for him.' I said that perhaps he might write something very simple, and added that one could imagine his thought being clear and simple, as, indeed, it is in parts of *Finnegan*, but that it would be difficult to imagine his using a simpler vocabulary, and still more so abandoning his linguistic inventions.

Eliot said that he did not care to listen to Beethoven so much as formerly just now. We both agreed on Bach and Gluck for the war.

I said how necessary I felt it to be lucid in poetry when the world was so chaotic. Eliot said he thought the poetic drama might be a way of attaining to lucidity, because, I suppose, it puts one outside oneself, whereas the poem tends to-day to be an introspective monologue. I said I was at once attracted by, and sick of, public events being dealt with in a public manner in poetic plays. He agreed that the problem was to write about a smaller theme—perhaps family life—which had all the implications of what is going on in the world outside. A play which to some members of the audience would be taken at its face value, and which would mean much more to others.

We talked about writing poetry. I tried to explain my difficulties. I write entirely from ear and from my own inner sense of what the poem should be. That is to say, that from the first few lines which occur to me suddenly as a 'gift' of inspiration, I work the rest out simply by writing and re-writing, so as to develop the logic of what I have to say as fully and clearly as possible. I dream that one might attain a great lucidity of expression exactly suited to form, with a great freedom in this way. But there are disadvantages in writing in what is essentially a 'vers libre' manner. In the first place it concentrates entirely on expression and is only poetry in so far as the thought happens to be poetic. Whereas, if one chooses a form which is in itself poetic, like most of the well-known traditional forms, the traditional use of the form tends towards poetry, to which one conforms. In other words, accepted forms tend towards an objective realization of what the form requires, whereas my way tends towards subjective needs and standards. On the other hand, contemporary writing which fits into traditional standards does not really interest me. Tom agreed with me about this, and he seemed also to agree that Auden's virtuosity in using accepted forms, while it certainly saves him from subjectivity and also, to some extent, from obscurity, has evaded

the real problem, which is to discover new, recognized, generally acceptable forms, suited to the requirements of to-day.

Another consequence of my way of writing is that I have no predisposition towards any particular medium. I have a prejudice in favour of poetry, a romantic feeling about the poet, a desire to be remembered, a desire to condense what I have to say into the most memorable form. But really my only qualification as a writer is that I have something which I want to express. That is, any situation in life with a human being as the centre of it seems to me to be interesting, and, potentially, if it is fully realized, to contain implications reaching out into the life of the time.

Thus the view of some communist critics that to-day one should only write about the workers and from their point of view seems to me not only nonsense, but also inhibitive and destructive to most writers living now—at all events until after the workers' revolution, when, presumably, working class writers will write about workers. The important thing is to write about what one knows and make it as real as possible. If a man lived in the depths of the country and felt that the only point in existence was to live in the town, the real dramatic centre of his position would be his vision of the town, which would be fantasy, imposed on the real fact of his living in the country. To come to town and try to become the most knowledgeable of writers about town life, would be to destroy the gift of the imagination. Yet that is the attitude of a communist critic like Caudwell towards the bourgeois writers whom he wants to go over to the working class. The fact is that the interest of the bourgeois writer who becomes a communist lies in the critical insight he then gets into the class he already knows, which now implies for him the sense of the workers beyond it. There are no negative situations in life. Everything implies its complement.

This is a digression, and I did not say all of it to Eliot. What I did state was my difficulty: that owing to my pre-occupation with what I have to say rather than with the means of saying it, I could, theoretically at all events, write

in any medium. It is simply a question of expressing the 'situation' in one form or another, and then, by writing and rewriting, working out the logic of the form for myself. But the question is whether, working everything out in this way, one isn't always going back to the same centre, expressing the subjective in subjective terms according to subjective standards. For example, if there were some accepted form of excellence recognized by the age—such as the heroic couplet in the eighteenth century—one could judge one's performance by one's power to excel in this.

Eliot said that an objective form might lie in the poetic drama, because here one had to meet one's audience half-way and adopt to some extent its standards. I agreed, but this, of course, raised the question of whether the poetic drama is a suitable form for the stage to-day. Unless this is so, poetic dramas published as books are just a waste of good verse—in so far as they succeed in being good writing.

Eliot also said that he wasn't sure whether he didn't agree with me about the difficulties of writing verse. I asked him whether he didn't feel that perhaps the trick of his poetry wasn't to make the reader identify himself with Tom Eliot and enter into his subjective vision. Then how could he be sure that at a later time, when the personal music and situations of Tom's poetry are no longer such as people can easily enter into, that his poetry won't be seen too much from the *outside*—as one sees the work of the 'eighties, for example?

#### OCTOBER 19TH

So it seems that I have made no entry here for eighteen days, and the time is approaching when there will be such a congestion of material that I won't know where to start, and will give up altogether. Here I am on the track of one of the main things which prevent writers from writing—the accumulation of unfulfilled tasks and projects and ideas, which finally so confuse one that one prefers forgetting one's inspiration and waiting for something new to dealing with this excess of material.



Let me sort things out a bit, make a list of my ideas and try to find some solution of the problem of having too much to write about. What have I done during the past few weeks? What are the ideas I have had in mind all the time but which seemed too difficult to undertake? Just as, if one was being dragged round in a whirlpool, in the centre of which there was an iron post to catch hold of, the difficulty of catching hold of it might be so great that finally one would become grateful to the very speed and rush of the waters which pulled one away and so spared one from making an effort?

That eighteen days can become lost, a mere torrent of movement and distraction and running round!

It wasn't only this journal I wanted to write, but also my novel and a long Eclogue, which I started at Oxford. Perhaps now this will be possible. I have notes in a brown book for about a dozen poems I want to get on with. Yet nothing drives poetry so much out of my head as big projects, like a novel or anything sustained. Perhaps one day I shall give up the idea of writing long books altogether, and just write poems.

When I think of these things I am tempted to get up and go for a walk. If I decide to do one of them, I am only drawing my attention to the fact that I am not doing the other. Happiness would lie in doing them all and having a full life as well. I'll try to do them all. The result may be a sense of failure, but the consolation will be that at the end of a few months I find I have after all done something.

#### OCTOBER 22ND

Yesterday morning we came to Lavenham. In the evening I played some gramophone records, Beethoven's op. 127 Quartet and the last movement of op. 130 in A minor. This last movement seems to me the most mysterious and religious of all Beethoven's ideas. It has a pure line which exists amongst the arid harsh surrounding writing like a view of a distant blue range of mountains beyond a rocky desert. At times the rocks shut out this refreshing vision, but it always exists beyond them, and at moments one is immersed

completely in it, until finally, as one at last turns away, it is repeated with fervour. Wonderful the passage at the end where one thinks the movement is finished, and it is repeated very quickly between the final chords, so that when the chords do close there is a suggestion of it again, a suggestion that this pure, limpid tune goes on for ever.

## OCTOBER 26TH

*Advantages of living alone*

Increase of energy and creativeness because I can indulge without remorse in the brutal selfishness of being a writer.

When I was living with someone, I was always reproaching myself for not paying her sufficient attention. This meant that all the time I felt under a certain restraint. It also derives from my attaching far too much importance to people's whims and moods, which always make me feel that I have *done something wrong to them*. I feel that pleasures which people might, in fact, easily sacrifice, are mysteriously important, and this makes any decision very difficult. I always feel that anyone else can be more satisfactory than I am. In fact, altogether, there is a lack of confidence in my behaviour within a possessive relationship. The effect of this is not to lessen but rather to increase egotism.

It is really rather disturbing to write this. I do not even entirely understand what I am trying to explain yet. But what it comes to is that when someone I am with, whom I am accustomed to think of as happy, is unhappy, I experience a feeling of deep apprehension, a sense that nothing is ever going to be better now, because I have discovered the final truth that *everything is wrong*. At the same time, a corresponding distress of my own is revealed by my companion's unhappiness, and I soon feel that it is this which is making her unhappy, so that I am responsible for all the defects in both our characters.

But it is not only unhappiness that distresses me in people, but also tiredness, laziness and other weaknesses. When I was sixteen and we used to go home in the Tube from my

grandmother's house on Sunday evenings, a thing that irritated me almost beyond bearing was if my sister or her companion, who were with me, yawned. The fact is that I was very tired myself, but it was impossible for me to relax, even so far as to yawn, and the fact that there were people who yawned unthinkingly, not accepting the necessity I saw of never revealing when one was tired, maddened me.

I know quite well that I am now giving myself away far more than if I confessed, for example, that I had committed a murder. The real crimes in contemporary bourgeois intellectual society are puritan traits of character.

However, there is no reason after all why I should not be frank. It is as though a special set of rules applies to my own life which does not apply to other people. These rules were put into my head by my father: whether he was conscious of it or no, he was infinitely ambitious for at least two of his sons, and particularly for me. I got to dislike his political-journalistic kind of ambition, but I was only able to wriggle out of it by substituting an even more difficult ambition of my own. Politicians cheat history, artists are history. Instead of being a fake great man, I wanted to be a real great writer. I have resisted my own ambition by sabotaging it for years. But the only relief for me now is to give way to the impulse to write endlessly. What is so difficult to understand is that there are people who are not ambitious at all: they just enjoy themselves and are content to be ignored. It does not seem fair.

## NOVEMBER 16TH

I have given up the idea of writing events from day to day here. That is not my *Sache*. It's best to write reminiscences and meditations and those fragmentary half-lost illuminations which occur to one just before one is going to sleep, or on a walk, or in the lavatory, when a whole sequence of thought is as clear and yet featureless as a face remembered in a dream.

The very vivid mental image of a sequence of words, just as one is taking one's socks off to go to bed, is like a view of mountains from an aeroplane. They lie there making a single,

complex but comprehensible shape, with folds in them. But one hoards the sense of distance for fear of being lost if one was down there amongst the verbs and other difficult parts of speech.

But that isn't the whole problem. It isn't just the lack of courage and patience that one fears, but that the descent to language actually puts one wrong. The words suggest their own sequences, partly dictated by the rules of language, partly by clichés and everything one has ever read, partly by habits of thought which one has formed. One repeats the same mistakes, one finds that instead of capturing the fresh and unique vision, one is just writing the same thing as one wrote before.

How I fear that I will fall into the grooves of words which, instead of expressing what I see, drag me along their lines away from it! I leave long gaps between my poems in the hope that the last will not influence the next one, and perhaps I shall create at last the real image of what, in a moment, I thought and saw.

Yet it's not just a matter of willing and working at it. It's a matter of letting oneself go. Somewhere in me there's a fountain of words that are wanting to say the thing I can say, only directly I set myself to will them out of me, the fears, ambitions, habits of thought, prejudices, demands of style, form a barrier between me and what is perfectly clear, if only I could reach it. On this side of the barrier where I am seated at my desk, I can only produce some faint imitation of something on the other side of my will.

It's a matter of patiently waiting till the moment comes, and then not disturbing it; of listening and praying, and not punishing oneself with threats. How is it that I am innocent when I punish myself so unceasingly?

If I didn't punish myself, the true strength of my innocence would flower without effort in my undemanding love for people and my ease of words.

I have lost it. I am conscious only of the bone of my forehead.

PATRICK WHITE

## COCOTTE

Allez, viens! Viens, Cocotte! Viens à Maman! Non, non, non! Mais elle vous dérange, Monsieur. Ah, vous êtes English. That is nice. I am always interested in the intercourse of nations. Ne fais pas ça, méchante. See, she is anxious that you throw stones. Perhaps if Monsieur throws a stone, Cocotte will fetch it back to Maman. C'est ça. La mignonne! Then we are all playing. I spend many hours like this when my husband is away. My husband has gone to Marseille. He comes back in four days. He is ingénieur. It is agreeable for him to make this journey to Marseille. And I am seldom triste alone in the apartment with Cocotte. She even sleep with me when my husband is away. Elle est si douce. But it is difficult sometimes for the bitch-dogs. And Papa ne veut pas de petits, petits enfants. He is tout à fait decided, my husband, that Cocotte ne se marie pas. Yes, Monsieur, you should find it more agreeable on the bench than sitting there on all those stones. Altogether it is agreeable at St. Grégoire. I watch the ships. I have a great wish to go to Martinique. Assez, Cocotte. Je parle à Monsieur. Tu m'ennuies. You are a sailor? Mais officier? One can see that. I have not meet any English seamen. On dit they are difficult to meet. But I have always this great wish to see foreign parts. I am very interested to see an orange tree. Qu'est-ce que tu cherches? Eh bien, donne la patte à Monsieur. See, she is anxious that you shake a hand. She like also that you tickle her. Tu n'es pas bien élevée avec ce monsieur qu'on ne connaît pas. Elle est tellement sensuelle. Ah oui, les chiennes! My husband cannot understand when he goes away for four days that I am not triste alone in St. Grégoire. Mais enfin, on s'amuse. One talks to interesting strangers. Enfin. . . . That is a pretty watch, Monsieur. One can see it is an

English watch. It is so chic, the English leatherwork. It is funny how the wrist does not sunburn underneath the watch. On dirait that the skin has quite a different touch. The English are smoother than the French. Then there are also les Espagnols. I go last night to see Carmen—we are abonnés at the Casino. I go alone, though my husband say it is not convenable, but then my husband is at Marseille. And I am so sensible for the music, Monsieur. I am artiste. I make my début in Iphigénie at Dijon. I play in Bordeaux Camille. Many people have not seen such a Camille. I still have what the papers say. That is before I marry, of course. My husband say it is not pudique, le théâtre. Eh bien! I do not say anything. As Monsieur sees, je suis femme du monde. Oh pardon. You have not enough place to sit. Only once I am not enough femme du monde. It is when Jules go to Marseille the time before. I am with Cocotte just like this. I am walking home with my paquets. I see a man, une personne très commune, vulgaire. I see him in the Rue Jaurès, under the plane tree, near the Pâtisserie de Mme Godet. I might say that is where we live, Monsieur, my husband and I, above the Pâtisserie of Mme Godet. Her son is about to finish his service militaire. Eh bien, I see this type near the plane tree. It is also near the church. You have seen the church? Il est bien musclé, ce coquin-là. Il me fait peur. He is perhaps a seaman, but not a nice seaman. He is tatoué with obscene objects. I have time to see that before I call to Cocotte: Viens vite, petite salope! Because would you believe it, Monsieur, she has taken a fancy to this monstre. I go quick. And she comes skipping very joyfully. I give her a bath only that morning. She is very white. And I am sur l'escalier, where every time it is so musty I mean to tell Mme Godet, when I hear, what do you think? I hear the steps of this type from out in the street. He is quite close to me. J'ai peur. I cannot even shriek. And then, what do you think? He has hit me on the backs of the legs. Pan! Pan! just like that. Every step I take, it is pan! pan! on the backs of the legs. So that

I am only dead alive when I reach the top. Because I can also feel his breath. It is on my neck opening the door. I go inside facing ce vicieux. I nearly fall over the mat of la Tante Marie-Claire. And he is standing, he has a blue chin, il est très fort, he is perhaps not seaman but boxeur. I look at him. I say: Allez-vous-en, salaud! Just like that. And he look at me. He say: Tant pis, ma belle! And he is off like jack-knife, while I am left holding Cocotte, she is so excited, she thinks Maman is having a game. I never tell my husband this, because he can misunderstand. I only tell Monsieur because he is sympathique. Oui, il est gentil, notre Monsieur, n'est-ce pas, Cocotte? Embrasse-moi, embrasse! Ah maladroite! It is what time, Monsieur, by your pretty watch? Tiens, it is time I walk back to the Rue Jaurès. Regardez! Ça me rend triste. The sail-ships with their blue sails. Monsieur, he is seaman, he will also understand that. He will understand the extreme fascination of these blue sails, why I sit nearly always in the evening, tous les soirs on the balcon above the Pâtisserie de Mme Godet. Toujours avant d'aller me coucher. Toujours when my husband is not there. Toujours. Eh bien, good-bye, Monsieur. J'espère. . . .

HAUTE COUTURE, by John Banting

# ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

## THE WORKS OF GRAHAM GREENE

HUMAN lives tend to be repetitious attempts to solve problems set in infancy. The terms of the nursery, teat, potty and lead cannon, are abandoned for adult symbols, the pipe, the bank balance and the Bren gun. But the form of the emotional struggle remains infantile. The ability or the disability, the 'bent' of the man, has been shaped years before he learns the conjugation of 'amo' or that work is prayer.

In no man is this plainer than in the imaginative worker. Plumber or platelayer, welder or joiner, has material to work, with little choice of alternative. But poet and novelist lift from experience images to fit a fantasy, excited most by outside events, which chime with the unconscious. Even the greatest writers repeat metaphors, characters, and plots which are mere variations of a central theme. Dostoevski, for example, rings changes on the 'pure harlot', Natasha, Sonya, Grushenka.

The novelist, who sets himself the task of portraying and interpreting the life of his time, is hampered by personal predilections as much as by limitation of experience. His eye is not the impartial lens of a camera; and his brain is more sensitive to some tints of experience than of others. The world, willy-nilly, becomes a personal world, bearing a certain resemblance to external reality, yet changed like an image in a mirror.

Few living English novelists derive more material from the daily newspaper than Graham Greene; yet even fewer reduce everything to so uniform a vision. The setting may be London or Liberia, Stockholm, Brighton or Tabasco. But

*The Power and the Glory*, by Graham Greene. Heinemann, 7s. 6d.



they are all in Greenland. The main character may be a drunken, adulterous priest, as in *The Power and the Glory*, a boy murderer, as in *Brighton Rock*, a hare-lipped gunman, as in *Gun for Sale*, or the pseudo-Harrobian cad of *England Made Me*. They are accurately observed. They speak their own language, usually. They have their convincing histories. Yet they are the same breed, Greenlanders. They are like a collection of sepia photographs.

Yes, they are seen in sepia, a world observed through sunglasses. But they have more in common than the tint of the observer's glass. They are declassed for one thing. Either, like Minty and Anthony Farrant in *England Made Me*, they have fallen in the world. They look with envy on the prosperous, conventioned middle class, where they would fit but for some, usually adolescent, lapse. They know more, they have suffered more; but knowledge is evil, suffering is like lemon juice to an oyster. Or like Rose Cullen from boredom, or Anne, the chorus girl, from a sense of justice higher than social justice, they have abandoned their class, still afraid, but rather excited. Or else, like the boy in *Brighton Rock*, Conrad Drover in *It's a Battlefield*, Ivar Krogh in *England Made Me*, they have risen from one class without being absorbed into another.

Greenlanders are homeless men, pining for domesticity, the kettle on the hob, warmth, security, love or tenderness, an end to all hate and struggle. Yet for a number of reasons this is impossible. Andrews is fleeing from fellow-smugglers and betrays them for lust instead of love. Conrad Drover loves his condemned brother's wife, but kills his love and the chance of domestic happiness by going to bed with her. The hare-lipped gunman has never dared to love, but when the police are after him for murder, he trusts a woman and is betrayed. Farrant, divided between love for his sister and lust for floosies, can always get a job because he's quick with figures, and never keeps it, because his fingers are as quick. *The Confidential Agent* must perform his mission. The drunken priest, persecuted by Red Shirts, must minister to his flock. Only the Boy in *Brighton Rock* has no hankering for

quietude, no vision of carpet slippers on a hearthrug. But the girl has, whom he marries to cover his crime.

In 1935, Greene made a journey through Sierra Leone and Liberia. It was a horrifying experience in itself: rats, fever, disease, discomfort and ignorance. The novelist, like one of his characters, went beyond the boundaries of his known society. But it was also the symbol of a return to childhood. ('Hell lies about us in our infancy.') When he returned, he wrote:

'One was back, or, if you will, one had advanced again, to the seedy level. This journey, if it had done nothing else, had reinforced a sense of disappointment with what man had made out of the primitive, what he had made out of childhood. Oh, one wanted to protest, one doesn't believe, of course, in "the visionary gleam", in the trailing glory, but there was something in that early terror and the bareness of one's needs, a harp strumming behind a hut, a witch on the nursery landing, a handful of kola nuts, a masked dancer, the poisoned flowers. The sense of taste was finer, the sense of pleasure keener, the sense of terror deeper and purer. It isn't a gain to have turned the witch or the masked secret dancer, the sense of supernatural evil, into the small human viciousness of the thin distinguished military grey head in Kensington Gardens with the soft lips and the eye which dwelt with dull lustre on girls and boys of a certain age.

'He was an old Etonian. He had an estate in the Highlands. He said: "Do they cane at your school?" looking out over the wide flat grass, the nursemaids and the children, with furtive alertness. He said: "You must come up and stay with me in Scotland. Do you know of any girls' schools where they still—you know—" He began to make confidences, and then, suddenly taking a grip of the poor sliding brain, he rose and moved away with stiff military back, the old Etonian tie, the iron-grey hair, a bachelor belonging to the right clubs, over the green plain among the nursemaids and the babies wetting their napkins.'—*Journey without Maps*, page 264.

'The seedy level!' That is the location of Greenland.

The sadist and the masochist, the impotent athlete, the incestuous brother and sister, the coward, the braggart, the man with the tic, the hare-lip, the spy-maniac, the torturer of spiders and the collector of small foreign coins, the diseased dentist in a foreign port, the one-legged military man managing a road-house, the rich Jew despised by aristocrats, the bullied chambermaid in an all-night hotel, the Major ordering whores by telephone ('a pig in a poke'), the lawyer who married beneath him lusting after typists who pass his window, the adulterous butler; they are as different, if not as chalk from cheese, at least as spurs from rubber drawers; but they are all seedy, the ingloriously vicious.

'The first thing I can remember at all was a dead dog at the bottom of my pram . . . Another fact was the man who rushed out of a cottage near the canal bridge and into the next house; he had a knife in his hand; people ran after him shouting; he wanted to kill himself.

'Like a revelation, when I was fourteen, I realized the pleasure of cruelty; I wasn't interested any longer in walks on commons, in playing cricket on the beach. There was a girl lodging close by I wanted to do things to; I loitered outside the door hoping to see her. I didn't do anything about it, I wasn't old enough, but I was happy; I could think about pain as something desirable and not as something dreaded. It was as if I had discovered that the way to enjoy life was to appreciate pain.'—*Journey without Maps*, page 30.

Nostalgia for childhood commonly takes the form of desiring to return to the state of irresponsibility, and happiness. But Greene desiderates the age when terror was really terrible and evil not the furtive Etonian in the Gardens, but Satan, and almost glorious. To most adults, the departure of fear is pride of maturity; but to Greene, it is the fading of a cherished vision. Greene is most objective, least morbid in sketches of childhood. *The Basement Room*, *The End of the Party*, *I Spy*.

'Hatred demands allegiance.' In pursuit of the seedy, he tries to recapture the horror of childhood in adult terms, at the same time that he is showing up its shabbiness. The

elaboration of a subtle imagination creates a world as harsh, treacherous, violent and cowardly to the adult mind, as the witch on the nursery landing was to the child. The heightened image, the acceleration of nature, the dynamic-static comparison ('The sympathy didn't belong; it could be peeled off his eyes like an auction ticket from an ancient flint instrument'), the sharp cutting of sentences, the emphasis on decay, deformity, and the bizarre make real a nightmare for the duration of reading.

'In the great public-school grounds above the sea the girls trooped solemnly out to hockey: stout goalkeepers padded like armadillos; captains discussing tactics with their lieutenants; junior girls running amok in the bright day. Beyond the aristocratic turf, through the wrought-iron main gates they could see the plebeian procession (going to the races), those whom the buses wouldn't hold plodding up the Down, kicking up the dust, eating buns out of paper bags. The buses took the long way round through Kemp Town, but up the steep hill came the crammed taxicabs—a seat for anyone at ninepence a time—a Packard for the members' enclosure, old Morrisises, strange high cars with family parties, keeping the road after twenty years. It was as if the whole road moved upwards like an Underground staircase in the dusty sunlight, a creaking, shouting, jostling crowd of cars moving with it. The junior girls took to their heels like ponies racing on the turf, feeling the excitement going on outside, as if this were a day on which life for many people reached a kind of climax. The odds on Black Boy had shortened. . . .'—*Brighton Rock*, page 142.

It is brilliant, the combination of speed with humour, observed fact with the fresh image (armadillo, amok, aristocratic, ponies), the skilful transitions, antitheses, anticipations. And yet . . .

Finishing any book by Greene, whether a travel-book, novel or 'entertainment' (potboiler to you), I have felt 'Brilliant! And yet . . .' I want to analyse two of the reasons for 'And yet . . .'

Greene is a Catholic and I do not believe in, like or admire

the Catholic Church. But this is not the reason for disagreement. In *The Lawless Roads*, he writes:

'And so faith came to one—shapelessly, without dogma, a presence above a croquet lawn, something associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way.<sup>1</sup> One began to believe in heaven *because one believed in hell, but for a long while it was hell only one could picture with a certain intimacy*—the pitchpine partitions in dormitories where everybody was never quiet at the same time: lavatories without locks: "There, by the reason of the great number of the damned, the prisoners are heaped together in their awful prison . . ." walks in pairs up the metroland roads, no solitude anywhere, at any time. The Anglican Church could not supply the same intimate symbols for heaven: only a big brass eagle, an organ voluntary, "Lord dismiss us with thy blessing", the quiet croquet lawn where one had no business, the rabbit and the distant music.'

The passage which I have italicised contains my dissatisfaction. Greene believes even now more strongly in evil than in goodness. Scatological references abound in his work. The sexual act is always portrayed as degrading (with the possible exception of two people copulating in a crowded Mexican prison amid excrement). Greenelanders have no joy, gaiety, humour or playfulness. They do not think profoundly, nor act constructively. Whenever Greene portrays a man of constructive action, he fails. Ivar Krogh, in *England Made Me*, never comes alive. The numerous communists who appear in Greene's work (and he is as fascinated by communists as he is ignorant of their organization, discipline and aims) are either Greenelanders such as Surrogate and Conder in *It's a Battlefield* or ideological 'humours', such as the Captain of Police in *The Power and the Glory*. There is much action in Greeneland, but it is the swift and scattered action of a game of hide-and-seek.

My first 'and yet' is not confined to the falsity of a similar mood. The falsity goes even deeper in the novels, as opposed

<sup>1</sup> Greene went to a school of which his father was headmaster. Weekends he could creep into his home; weekdays he was a boarder.

to the 'entertainments'. Analysis of *Brighton Rock* will show what I mean. The plot of *Brighton Rock* is that 'the Boy', who is leader of a bookmakers' protection racket, murders a hanger-on of a rival gang in revenge for the murder of his old boss, and to cover his tracks is led to meet and then marry a pathetic little waitress, who might give evidence against him. A cheery sort of Wife of Bath who was with the murdered man just before he was done in isn't satisfied with the coroner's verdict and finally lays bare the crime. This plot, modelled on the Brighton race gangs of a few years back, is material for a good straightforward realistic melodrama.

But Greene is concerned with a philosophical theme, the contrast between human right and wrong, and divine good and evil. The Boy is a Catholic. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. His wrongdoing has a dimension of sin, which his unbelieving associates do not share. '*Credo in unum Satanum*,' he states. The waitress, Rose, also a Catholic, consciously commits mortal sin, because she loves the Boy. With her eyes open, she goes to Eternal Damnation. Ida, the jovial detective, doesn't believe in that sort of stuff. But she does believe in Right, Wrong, and Justice being done.

All three are recognizable characters at the beginning of the book. But by the end, the conflict between their own natures and the philosophic purposes for which the author is using them has torn them to pieces. They should be laid bare, but they are laid out.

The same falsity is apparent in *The Man Within*, where a very improbable vamp is introduced into a Lewes inn in order to seduce the hero into doing his duty and justify the philosophic pattern.

My second 'and yet' is that with the exception of *England Made Me* and *It's a Battlefield* (still in many ways his best novel), all his novels and entertainments have the same formula, the hunted man. Though he has expended tremendous care on the construction of sentences, diversity of incident, and originality of setting, he has been content with the same method of precipitating character. The pursuit

element (Kate pursuing Anthony, Conrad Drover the Commissioner of Police) enters into even the two novels mentioned as exceptions. The new novel, *The Power and the Glory*, is about a hunted priest.

When Greene went to Tabasco, he was told that the last victim of Garrido's clerical persecution was a 'whiskey' priest, who survived for years in the swamp and jungle, administering the sacrament until he was caught and shot. The theme combined religion and the hunted man. *The Power and the Glory* is the result.

I find it difficult to assess this novel purely as a work of imagination, because I know Mexico, and the Mexican Indian is not a true Greenlander. So when the priest, returning to a village, where his daughter by an Indian woman lives, finds the child at the age of six tittering with precocious sexuality and obscenely exposing herself to her father, my certainty that this is untrue of an Indian village child makes it hard for me to judge the validity of the suspicion that the incident is as wrong æsthetically as it is factually.

Leaving reality aside, however, I find the book unsatisfying because the nature of the theme is in violent conflict with its treatment. The novel moves at the same time too fast and too slow; there is too much action—the game of hide-and-seek—and too little development. An epic theme, which should slowly have gathered speed and power, has been treated as a thriller. The reader moves so fast—from character to character and event to event—(the author's first attempt to deal with a long passage of time)—that the total effect is dissipated in the confusion of detail. If incidents had been simplified and given greater weight, the priest's open-eyed return to martyrdom would have been inevitable. As it is, the swift, nervy tempo of the writing makes it capricious.

To conceive *The Power and the Glory* in its proper form demanded a poet's imagination. Greene has the imagination of a poet, but it is directed to smaller things than plot, the image, the setting, the word. His conception of plot has been a mixture of satire and pathos. He is preoccupied with the

anti-climax, the seediness of the old Etonian in the Gardens after the epic terror of the witch on the nursery landing. In the past, he has got away with it,—and the anti-climax is the easiest literary device to practise, because your characters can't answer back when you let them down. But in *The Power and the Glory* he chose a theme too ambitious for the anti-climatic technique. If he is to continue along this course, he will have to enlarge the territory of Greenland and get it a more variable climate.

*Other books by Graham Greene*

Novels

<i>The Man Within</i>	Heinemann
<i>It's a Battlefield</i>	Heinemann
<i>England Made Me</i>	Heinemann
<i>Brighton Rock</i>	Heinemann

Entertainments

<i>Stamboul Train</i>	Heinemann
<i>A Gun for Sale</i>	Heinemann
<i>The Confidential Agents</i>	Heinemann

Short Stories

<i>The Basement Room</i>	Cresset Press
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Travel

<i>Journey Without Maps</i>	Heinemann
<i>The Lawless Roads</i>	Longmans



## SELECTED NOTICES

*The Locks of Norbury*, by the Duchess of Sermoneta. Murray, 18/—.

*The Eve of Victorianism. The Reminiscences of Emma Sophia Countess Brownlow*. Murray, 6/—.

The Duchess of Sermoneta, delving back among her English ancestry, has written a long, rambling book, full of old letters and forgotten stories, which throws no particular light on anything, but is pleasant reading. Had the *Locks of Norbury* been invented by a painstaking 'period' novelist in order to display his knowledge, they would seem exaggerated: they made too many unusual marriages, knew too many odd, interesting people. The delightful thing is that, for once, it is all perfectly true. The founder of the family, William Lock the first, was a wealthy man of mysterious parentage, who married Frederica Schaub, the daughter of a Swiss diplomatist in the service of George II, and built Norbury Park, where he lived in great contentment with his wife and family, and entertained, as his friends, Fanny Burney, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Fuseli, the Angersteins and Madame de Stael. His son Charles was English Consul in Naples in 1799, where his well-bred young wife incurred the immediate dislike of the middle-aged strumpet Lady Hamilton, and young Lock himself quarrelled with Nelson. He had a passion for sight-seeing which ended fatally, for he died of a fever caught while exploring the plains of Troy. His wife, Cecilia, was one of the twenty-three children of that remarkable Duchess of Leinster who disarmed the criticism of her relatives when she married her sons' unprepossessing Scottish tutor by declaring that she knew she was in the wrong, but he loved her to adoration, 'and that's very captivating'. After her husband's death, Cecilia Lock devoted herself to her children, but was not always fortunate in settling them, marrying Emmy, the eldest, to a monster of an Italian count.

Although the author carries the book forward to the end of the nineteenth century, she is chiefly concerned with the period between the building of Norbury in 1774 and the early death of the third William Lock, drowned in a squall on Lake Como, in sight of his young wife, on September 14th, 1832. The picture given of the easy cultured life of the English upper class during these sixty years is very vivid, and the personalities are clear and attractive—Mrs. Delany, with her album of intricate paper pictures, Mrs. Lock, with her passion for reading aloud, Fanny Burney finding late romance in the forties with General d'Arblay. The Duchess of Sermoneta has just that touch of sentiment which gives her writing the flavour, almost, of personal reminiscences. To borrow the words used by Mrs. Charles Lock when describing the acting of Mademoiselle Mars,—and with an intention no less flattering,—this is a 'very gentlewomanlike' book.

Lady Emma Edgcumb, afterwards Lady Brownlow, whose reminiscences, together with further hitherto unpublished additions, are now re-issued, was a gentle, well-bred, moderately well-educated woman, of a serious turn of mind, who moved in the highest political and social circles during the opening decades of the nineteenth century. A niece of Lady Castlereagh, she was at the Dutch Court in 1814 and in Paris in 1814 and 1815; she was a personal friend of Queen Adelaide, whom she accompanied on a visit to her home in Germany, and she watched with pained apprehension the passage of the Reform Bill.

At first the tenor of the book seems almost too quiet: there is an impression of a matter-of-fact, prim little person. The Jews in the Frankfort Ghetto struck her as 'an unpleasant set of people, inclined to be impertinent', and a representation of naked Greek warriors in David's studio was written down as 'very curious, and very French'. But little by little the smooth, unemphatic words cast their spell. Lady Brownlow was neither witty nor profound, but she was completely truthful. Strong affections and a high sense of

duty guided her actions, and if they give a certain stiffness to her impressions, they also give a solidity unusual in fire-side reminiscences. The domestic picture which she draws of the Castlereaghs in Paris throws a new and mellowing light on the handsome, too hard, features of the great statesman. In Emma Brownlow's life he was remembered as the kindly host, who worked through the quiet evenings at his despatches while she and Lady Castlereagh prattled over their sewing. Again, far more graphic than any set description of a Coronation is Lady Brownlow's tale of how she wiped Queen Adelaide's forehead after the anointing, first with cotton wool and then with cambric, and next affixed her crown by means of four long pins thoughtfully stuck in her dress . . . 'I had all ready and there was no bustle'. There can never have been much bustle where the methodical Lady Brownlow was concerned, nor much dash and sparkle either. But if you are the sort of person who loves to sit spell-bound over the tea-table while some very old lady, elegant and beautiful in her black watered silk, talks quietly of the things she did long ago, you will like this book very much indeed.

C. V. WEDGWOOD

*Peace, it's Wonderful* by William Saroyan. Faber & Faber 8/3.

*Green to Amber* by Sherard Vines. Cape 8/3.

In twenty-seven episodes Mr. Saroyan feels the mind of that vast America which moves beneath the surface wealth. He does not condemn and he does not exhort. For because he himself has lived among gamblers, bums, workmen, motor salesmen, travellers and the poor, he can speak their lives as they are, not as they might or should be.

From the lives of all the characters of this book rises a melancholy. Much is ugly, but in that ugliness is a beauty and power which probably lie beyond comprehension, and is for that reason moving. "A number of the Poor" and "Noonday dark enfolding Texas" are illustrative of a

belief that there is still some goodness in life, whatever the economic conditions. In the latter, speaking of El Paso in Texas, he says: "It was the loveliest and ugliest city I have ever seen. If you looked at the buildings and streets, it was ugly, but if you are looking beyond the buildings and the streets at God there, the living, it was lovely."

It would be wrong to imagine that the author, because he sees people as they are, clerks as clerks, unemployed as unemployed, would always have them so. Rather, a modern Gorki, he registers the suffering of humanity with the awareness of a poet. ". . . And when I walked into the street I was laughing because it was so good to be in the world, so excellent to be a part of the chaos and unrest and agony and magnificence of this place of man, the world so comic and tragic to be alive during a moment of its change. . . ."

But it's not the laugh of a cynic.

From the Midland town of Rumpingham with its suburb of Mere, a selection from the middle class grow steadily more defined in their inability to grasp the political situation of pre-Munich, and in their inability to see themselves with the irony of Mr. Vines. Middle class with little or much money, dealing with the working class only so far as sex necessitates, they are representative enough of England's pre-war middle class. Never able to see beyond the pettiness of their own surroundings, excessively attached to sex and their sex problems, their financial worries, around them moves a world of war, labour problems, strikes, and taxes, which they try to ignore, but which lurk in the subconscious, frightening.

Mr. Haligast is the typical bourgeois communist who obtains employment in the government by graft and finds capitalism within his grasp. Mr. Faggs the capitalist is too perturbed by his pursuit of a mate and the fluctuating Exchange to appreciate independence. So with a humorous irony Mr. Vines evolves his anchorless characters, with almost an excess of kindness.

MICHAEL NELSON

*The Music Review*, a new quarterly periodical (edited by G. N. Sharp, published by W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., Cambridge, price of single copy 1s.) deserves attention and encouragement. In a short prefatory note the editor states somewhat apologetically that although this musical magazine had been planned before the outbreak of war, war time circumstances were mainly responsible for the rather belated publication of No. 1 (February 1st, 1940).

Yet the various and throughout remarkable contents of this number do not have a war time appearance. They are, indeed, noteworthy for their obvious lack of any "national" prejudice since no less than three contributions are by distinguished Austro-German "Refugees from Nazi oppression"—O. E. Deutsch, by far the greatest expert on Franz Schubert, gives a highly informative account of "The Riddle of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony"; Paul Hirsch, the well-known collector of a world-famous musical library (formerly at Frankfort a/M, now newly established at Cambridge University), writes about "Early Mozart Editions", thus adding useful supplements to A. Einstein's recent bibliographical research on Mozart; and, finally, Egon Wellesz, the excellent Viennese composer and musicologist—at present lecturing on Byzantine music at Oxford—gives an admirable morphological survey of Gustav Mahler's Symphonies". (However, two misleading printing errors in this article should be corrected: the date of Mahler's death was not February 21st, but May 18th, 1911, the first performance of his Eighth Symphony at Munich took place on September 12th, 1910, not 1900.) An hitherto unpublished letter by Mahler addressed to Wellesz and some very sensible suggestions to English performers on how to popularize this last great Austrian Symphonist of classical parentage add to the value of this essay. G. Sharp contributes a useful study on E. Bloch's recent Violin Concerto and criticises some displeasing features of BBC musical policy with gratifying frankness. In "Artistic Direction" W. J. Turner calls for a reorganization of musical life in England. An exhaustive study by

Cecil Gray on Pietro Raimondi (1786-1853), the half crazy champion of multiple counterpoint (who at one time even aroused the deep admiration of Liszt) will certainly not fail to attract friends of operatic Quixotism.

The intention of the editor to include in future numbers A. Einstein's new appendix to his recent edition of the "Köchel Mozart Catalogue" should be widely appreciated by all connoisseurs of Einstein's unique and invaluable research work. The reviewing section of the magazine reveals an active critical interest in actual problems of musical everyday life as well as in musicological questions of real importance and is often uncompromising towards the shortcomings of an English music season in war time. Facsimile letters, musical examples and photos are admirably reproduced.

H. F. REDLICH

*Portrait of a Painter: The Authorised Life of Philip de László.* By Owen Rutter. Hodder & Stoughton, 21/-. One feels tempted to exclaim, like Fuseli on Sir Martin Shee, that de László was 'the virry vorst bainter that Gode iver made', but to do that would be to do him an injustice; despite Mr. Rutter's title, he was not a painter but a social success. Painting was not a vocation but a profession; de László could have flattered a mongrel bull-terrier into the belief that it looked like a greyhound, and this social gift obtained the prize it deserved. In 'the stately homes of England' paintings by de László hang sleek cheek by actual jowl with Gainsboroughs. The 'local lad' from Budapest made good and obtained the world he wanted, where an invitation to the Garden Party at Buckingham Palace more than made up for a rebuff from the Royal Academy. This book is a social document of some value and presents an extremely vivid picture of the decline in taste of the ruling classes, whose ancestors had patronised the great names of the eighteenth century. As is, perhaps, natural, the only other 'painters' mentioned in the index are Sir John Lavery

and Sargent. With commendable appropriateness, the place of a *catalogue raisonné* of de László's works is occupied by an impressive list of the orders conferred upon him. This provides the just comment on his life.

*Babel, a Multi-Lingual Critical Review.* Bowes & Bowes, Cambridge. 1s. 6d.

This first issue of *Babel* has combined the precision of academic writing with the ease and individuality it so often lacks. The material here matches the style, for it ranges from a carefully documented article on æsthetics to a clever translation into French of the 'Jabberwock'. There is an excellent article on criticism by Denis Saurat and one on London by Paul Morand. One would wish that the third article, in French, had also been by a Frenchman, and would suggest that the editors of a linguists' periodical should not overlook in future such a stream of translated anglicisms, of misprints and faulty spellings. A compact essay on German literature, a short article on Larra and an incisive review of recent Swiss publications on Rilke comprise the rest of the magazine, apart from three poems in Spanish of little interest. Altogether *Babel* promises well for linguists and littérateurs alike, and it is to be hoped that the editors will continue to present such varied fare to those who for long years have had to satisfy their hunger on the small amount of space grudgingly allowed in English periodicals to foreign literature and on the lifeless reports on research done in our universities.





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